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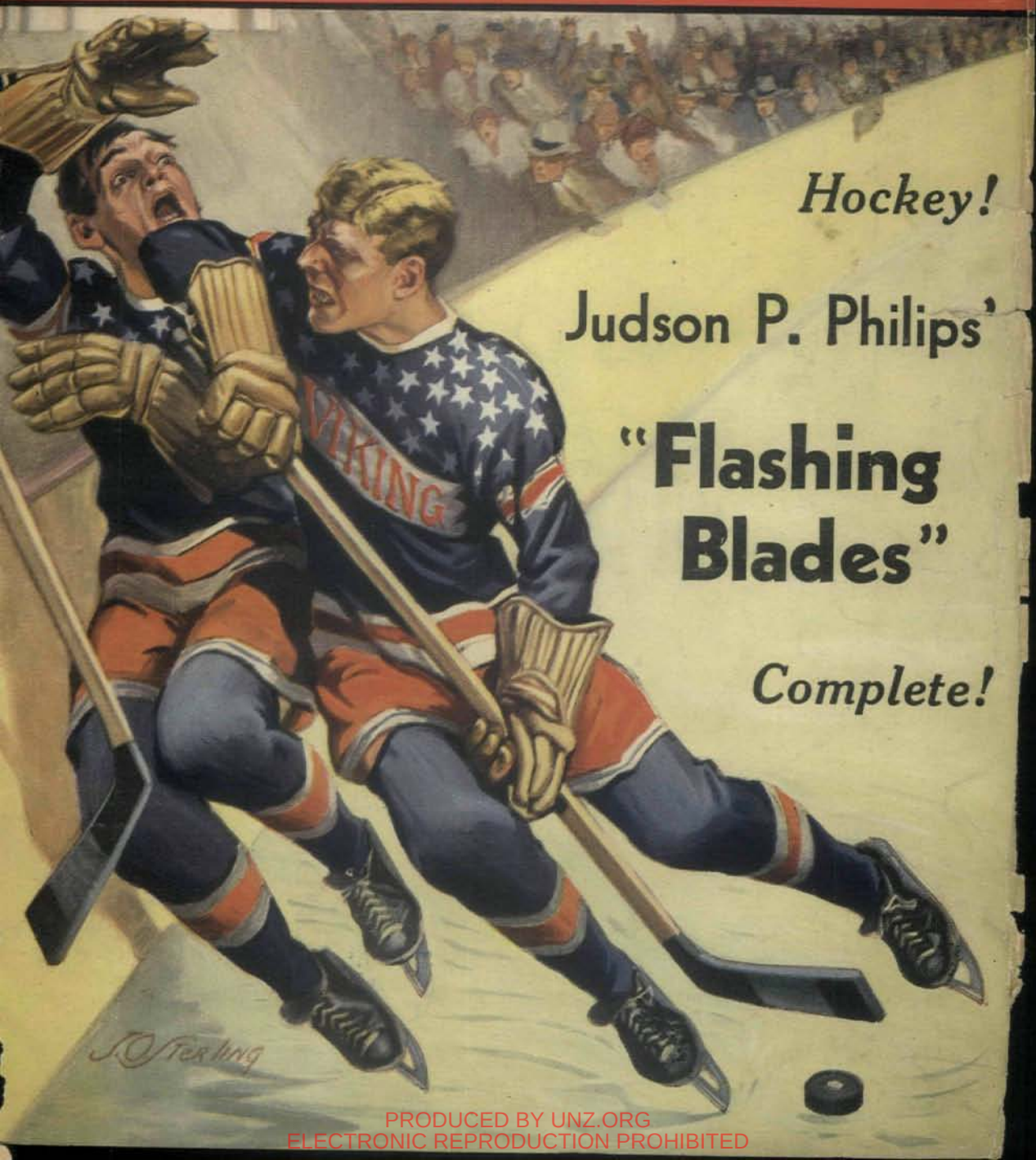

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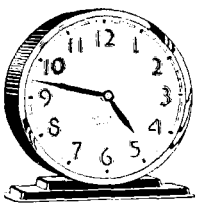

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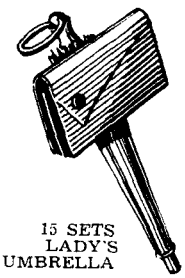

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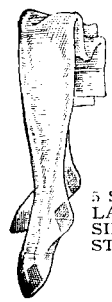

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Action Stories of Every Variety

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This Magazine is on sale every Tuesday

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK
WILLIAM T. DEWART, President RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

CANADIAN EDITION

Printed in Canada by The MacLean Publishing Company, Limited, Toronto, Ontario, and distributed by The Trans-Canada News Company, 210 Dundas Street West, Toronto, Ont.

Published weekly and copyright, 1935, by The Frank A. Munsey Company. Single copies, 15 cents; by the year, $7.00 in Canada. Remittances should be made to The Trans-Canada News Company, 210 Dundas Street West, Toronto, Ont., by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered. The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publisher's permission. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyrighted in Great Britain and Canada.

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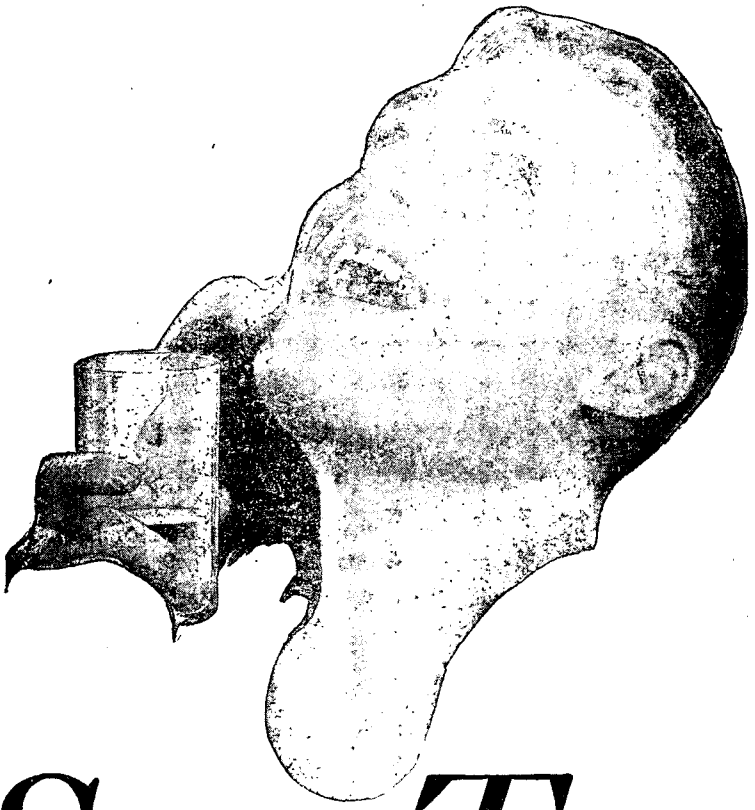

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Flashing Blades

"You can't steam up a professional crowd the way you can a college team," said Old Tom Cutler, manager of the quarrelsome Vikings. Yet he had to do something drastic

By

JUDSON P. PHILIPS

Author of "Pigskin Pirate," "Black Panther," etc.

Complete Novel

CHAPTER I.

WHAT'S WRONG?

SO help me, if it hadn't of been for Raphael Jones I would of smacked that stupid lug in charge of the gate! He's standin' there lookin' like a stuffed hippopotamus

The Midget turned a complete somersault

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with an expression on his face as if he was the president of Madison Square Garden Corporation.

"Where do you think you're goin', wise guy?" he says to me as I start to walk through the gate.

"I'm looking for the Vikings' dressing room," I tell him.

"Got a pass?" he says.

"No," I says, "but I'm Joey Martin, the Vikings' new trainer."

"I'm John J. Raskob," he says, dead pan. "I take my vacation this way."

Well, I start to burn up. In the first place I'm late, which is no way to start a new job. In the second place I got half of Eighth Avenue all over my overcoat on account of a cab sideswiped me into the gutter when I was tryin' to dodge across the street.

"Listen," I says, very quiet on account of I'm controllin' my temper. "You send word in to Old Man Cutler that Joey Martin is out here tryin' to get in."

"You haven't got any message for the President of the United States while I'm about it, have you?" he asks, sarcastic.

I can feel the blood runnin' up into my face. I turn my left ear toward him. It's the one Benny Leonard messed up when I'm actin' as sparrin' partner for him about fifteen years ago.

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"I didn't get this dabbin' it with no powder puff," I says. "If you don't lay off the comedy and tell Old Man Cutler I'm here I'm likely to start takin' you apart."

"There is no time like the present to begin," he said, and I see him givin' a couple of the special Garden cops the eye.

I'm just startin' to draw back and let him have one before the cops can close in when someone grabs me by the arm . . . someone laughin'. I turn around quick and see Raphael Jones. He's a kind of a dark, handsome young fellow in his early thirties, always smilin' a sour kind of a grin. And I guess there ain't anyone in New York who don't know that his column in the *Globe* is just about the best sport stuff anybody's writin' today.

"Well, well, well," he chuckles, "if it isn't my old friend Joey Martin, the liniment king! Did you leave all the little college boys tucked away in their beddies?"

I've known Raphael ever since he started writin' sports. You see, I've been trainin' the football and baseball teams up at Marquand for around twenty years, and Raphael always covers the big games.

"Listen, Raph, tell this thick-headed lout who I am," I says.

He gives the doorman a solemn look. "This, my dear Max, is Joey Martin. He was born some forty-five years ago in the slums of New York. As a boy, Joey was very fond of torturing gatemen. As he has grown older, despite his meek exterior, he has continued to practice until it has become a fine art. It is very lucky for you, my dear Max, that I happened along. Very lucky indeed. Joey has been known to do things to gatemen so that even their mothers had difficulty recognizing them. By the way Joey, what *are* you trying to put over on Max?"

"He ain't puttin' nothin' over on me!" this Max grumbles.

"Listen," I says, hot under the collar, "the regular trainer for the Vikings come down with the measles three days ago. Major Corbin up at Marquand told Old Man Cutler I'd be a good one to fill in the job for the rest of the season. Old Man Cutler wired me to come here and here I am, and here's Cutler's telegram, and if this big-mouthed—"

"Why didn't you show me the telegram?" Max snaps at me.

"Because you don't look to me as if you could read," I tells him. "And now do I go through the gate quiet like or do I take you along with me?"

"Allow me the privilege of escorting you to your new laboratory, professor," drawls Raphael Jones.

He takes me down a long corridor and pretty soon we come to a door on which is printed "MR. CUTLER."

"Old Tom may be in here," says Raph.

And he walks into the room without knockin'.

WELL, that room is a small one and it's jammed full of guys at that moment, most of 'em I recognize as newspaper men, on account of they all hang around Marquand before a football game. Standin' behind a desk, a pipe that ain't lit clamped between his teeth, is a bird I spot from his pictures as Old Tom Cutler. He's darn close to sixty, but there's plenty of the old fire in his eyes right now. If it wasn't for his snow-white hair you might take him for twenty years younger. That, and the crow's feet around the corners of his eyes. There was somethin' about the

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way he stood there, grippin' the back of his chair so tight I could see white all around his knuckles, that made it look as though these mugs had him fightin' with his back to the wall about something.

"The wolves in cry," says Raphael Jones to me, soft like.

I don't get the drift of this crack, but since Old Tom don't seem to notice us we just stand there. There's a guy from the *Graphic* standin' up in front of the others, and he's one bird I never could go for. He used to be always nosin' around the locker room at college, tryin' to find out somethin' that was none of his business.

"We aren't trying to run you down, Tom," he's sayin', "but the hockey public has a right to some kind of a statement from you. Here you've got a team that's been a top flight bunch for five or six years. You've got the same stars, and some damn good new material, yet you're coming down the stretch with a good chance of muffing a place in the play-offs."

"So what?" says Old Tom. His voice is kind of hoarse.

"What's the answer?" says the *Graphic* man. "You lost five straight games and you've got four more coming up with the four toughest teams in the League. The way the Vikings have been going I wouldn't want to bet they'd win any of them. A bunch of star players don't go flooey this way, Tom, without a reason."

"New York won't stand for a loser, Tom," says one of the other guys.

"Reputations aren't enough to bring 'em in at the box office," says another.

"Yeah," says somebody else.

"You gentlemen," says Old Tom sarcastic like, "are all hockey *experts*. I shouldn't think it would be necessary for you to consult a mere hockey manager on a subject like this."

THE *Graphic* man butts in again. "No one is taking anything away from your knowledge of the game, Tom. You played it for twenty years and you've been a big league manager and coach for eight more. But you and I know that there's more than that to running a club."

"I'd like to know what you think it is?" says Old Tom, quiet.

The *Graphic* man looks uncomfortable. "Maybe you saw my article in this afternoon's paper."

"I don't read the papers . . . on hockey," says Old Tom. "What did you say?"

"You won't like it," says the *Graphic* man. But he unfolds the paper he's carryin' and starts readin'. Before he's through I'm about ready to let him have one. That guy always did get my cork out!

The prolonged slump into which the New York Vikings have fallen is alarming the loyal army of fans who follow their fortunes at the Garden. In the midst of a long losing streak the possibility that they may fail to qualify for the play-offs must be faced. What's wrong? The Vikings have the players but they don't seem to be able to click.

Can it be that Old Tom Cutler is losing that inspirational quality that made it possible for him to drive his teams to the heights in the past? No one can deny that Old Tom knows hockey inside out, but has he lost his grip on the temperamental stars who make up his squad?

Colonel Matson, the Vikings' owner, should consider the situation thoughtfully. New York deserves a winning team, and if Old Tom has lost his hold, no sentimental barriers should stand in the way of appointing a new pilot. It's a winning team that brings the fans out and the shekels in, and it's possible that a shake-up at this time would put the Vik-

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ings back on the winning path. Everyone knows what Old Tom has done for hockey, but sentiment can be carried too far.

You could of heard a pin drop when the *Graphic* man gets through readin'. I'm watchin' Old Tom and he looks like someone hit him.

"I'm sorry to give it to you this way, Tom," says the *Graphic* man, "but you got to see how the land lies. You've got to see how important it is that you should make some kind of a statement."

Old Tom takes a deep breath and his eyes look as though they're burnin' right into that fresh reporter. "This is the only statement I have to make," he says slowly. "When I have to ask the advice of the press on how to run my team, just that day you will see my resignation on Colonel Matson's desk. What do you want me to do, make some public criticism of my players? I've never passed the buck yet, gentlemen, and if you have selected me for a goat in this situation I don't see anything I can do about it. But I'll tell you one thing. If I'm to be the goat, I see no reason for being pleasant to you. So if you will all get the hell out of my office, and *stay out,* you will be doing me a service. When Colonel Matson fires me and there's someone else in here maybe you can get a statement from *him.* Good evening!"

These guys all start shufflin' out, mumblin' to themself. Boy, wouldn't I of liked to had about five minutes in a dark alley with that *Graphic* man! Him readin' that dirty article of his right out to Old Tom!

"Well, what the hell are you waiting for?" It's Old Tom, and he's lookin' at Raph and me with his eyes blazin'.

"Take it easy, Tom," says Raphael Jones. "I wasn't one of that little delegation. This is your new trainer, Joey Martin. He was about to commit mayhem on Max at the gate, so I brought him in."

OLD TOM comes over and shakes hands. "I should have left word at the gate about you, Joey, but I . . . well, I had a lot of other things on my mind."

"That's okay, Mr. Cutler," I says. "I wouldn't have been so late only I don't seem to have no drag with the engineers on the New York, New Haven & Hartford. My rattler was forty minutes behind time. And say," I says, "you don't want to let them rats get you down, Mr. Cutler. For two cents I'd of slugged that guy from the *Graphic* right where he stood. I've run into him before."

Old Tom gives my arm a tight grip. "Corbin told me you were all right, Joey."

"You can count on me right down to the ground," I says. "And anyhow, I never see a sports writer that knew what he was talkin' about."

"Present company always excluded," says Raphael Jones with a grin.

"You ain't as bad as some of 'em," I tells him.

Old Tom looks at Raphael. "Do you feel the same way about things as your friends out there?" he asks.

"You know damn well I don't," says Raphael. "But I'd give a hat to know what *is* wrong with the Vikings, Tom."

Old Tom laughs a bitter kind of laugh. "Anyone with eyes in his head could *see* what the trouble is if he wanted to," he says. "But if I'm elected to take the rap, I guess I can take it and keep my mouth shut. But

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I don't have to listen to those jackals howling for my blood. And I won't." He glances at his watch and then looks at me. "I guess you've gathered that everything isn't peaches and cream around here, Joey. But it's almost game time, so I'll take you across the hall and introduce you to the dizziest bunch of prima donnas you ever hope to see. The New York Vikings!"

CHAPTER II.

FACE OFF.

I DON'T know what I expected, but I guess it was somethin' a lot different from what I see. I ain't never had anythin' to do with professional athletes but I figure they wouldn't be like the college kids before a game. You can't blame those youngsters for bein' all nerves and screwed up tighter than a drum-head before a game, but I looked for somethin' a whole lot different from these old stagers that'd been playin' big league hockey for years.

Say, you could of cut the atmosphere in that dressin' room with a knife. Like any other sport fan I guess I'd read a lot about the Vikings, but I hadn't never seen 'em—in action or any other way. But the way the writers talk about 'em you'd picture 'em a happy-go-lucky, care-free, devil-may-care gang, laughin' and fightin' their way to the Stanley Cup finals every year. These mugs act like a bunch of attendants at the morgue.

Most of them are already dressed in their pale Columbia-blue jerseys with the big white numbers on their back. They got on their skates and knee pads, and them big, ribbed gauntlets like they all wear—and they're just sittin' around on the benches, starin' down at the floor. No wisecracks; no laughin' and jokin' the way you'd expect. Then I hear somebody snap:

"For God's sake, look where you're steppin'!" Just like somebody had committed an ax murder on his grandmother.

I jump about a foot and realize I'd been standin' on a hockey stick lying on the floor. The guy who'd hollered at me was a big, broad shouldered player with bright red hair and blue eyes that would of froze the water right in your kitchen sink. I spot him for Red Simmons, captain of the Vikings, and supposed to be one of the best forwards in major league hockey.

"My error," I says.

"You don't have to be so damned clumsy," he snaps.

Nobody else says anything and I can feel my gorge risin' but I look at Old Tom and I decide I won't let him down now by startin' a row. So I shut up like a clam.

"This is Joey Martin, the new trainer," says Old Tom.

A couple of guys grunt, but that's all. It certainly wasn't no old-home-week reception. Then a bell rings and I see Old Tom's set his lips in a kind of a straight line.

"All right, boys," he said. "Out on the ice."

He starts for the door and I after him. Raph Jones pats me on the back.

"See you later, kid." And he scrams.

I'm just about to follow Old Tom Cutler out the door when somebody grabs me. It's this Red Simmons, and his eyes are blazin'.

"What the hell are you tryin' to do, jinx us?" he snarls at me. And before I know what's up he pushes me back against the wall. The guy in the goalie's pads goes out first, Simmons

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follows him, and then the rest of 'em seem to trail after in a regular order. A little guy with curly blond hair brings up the rear. He grins at me—the first smile I've seen on any of their faces.

"We're superstitious as hell," he says, kind of dry like. "We always go out onto the ice in the same order."

"Good luck, eh?" I says.

He laughs. "Sure. That's why we've lost our last five games. My name's McGrath."

Midget McGrath! Everybody who knows anythin' about hockey has heard of the Midget.

"I've heard plenty about you," I says.

"I've heard about you, and I *saw* you once," laughs the Midget. "You fell over a water bucket right in the middle of the Yale Bowl. I laughed myself sick."

"That ought to make us pals," I says, kind of sore.

He gives me a gentle poke in the ribs with the end of his stick. "You and I will get along okay, Joey," he says. "We better get out there before the boys think I'm puttin' a witch's curse on 'em by being late!"

BOY, there's plenty of color to one of them Garden ice festivals! I slid in along the bench next to Old Tom Cutler. The players are out on the ice skating around casual like, all takin' turns at drivin' the puck at Tubby Clark, who's standin' in the nets. Clark wears a black baseball cap pulled down over his eyes and he fidgets around like he was nervous.

The Tigers, the visiting club, is workin' out at the other end and their brown and yellow uniforms is in sharp contrast to the Vikings' pale blue. It looks like a good house, and it's fillin' up fast with everything from gents in high silk hats to bums you wonder where they got the seventy-five for a gallery seat. Joe Basile's band is poundin' out some kind of a tune down to the Ninth Avenue end of the rink. Then the officials come out, wearin' white sweaters, and tryin' out a few fancy steps on their skates.

The announcer starts bellowin' through the loud speaker. "Attention please! Attention please! Tonight we have with us a man who . . . blah . . . blah . . . blah . . . One of the greatest . . . blah . . . blah . . . blah. . ." I couldn't make out a darn thing he's sayin'. Then who should come out on the ice, with one of the officials holdin' him up by the arm so as he won't slip, but the old Manassa Mauler, Jack Dempsey himself. I damn near fall off the bench. All the spare players come back to the bench and the two centers get ready for the face off. Jack drops the puck and then goes to the sidelines and the referee drops it all over again. Then hell breaks loose on the ice!

CHAPTER III.

GOOFY?

I'VE seen a lot of college hockey, but it's just as different from this game as two guys wrestlin' for points in a gymnasium and a couple of Jack Curley's championship boys tossin' each other up into the second balcony. I've got a score card and I'm startin' to spot some of the Vikings by the numbers on their shirts.

Joe Nelson of the Vikings gets the best of that first face off and the puck goes back to Biff Wade on the defense. Wade starts tearin' down the ice like a runaway locomotive. For a big guy

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he's a streak of lightning. Neville, the Tiger's center, tries to poke check the rubber away from him but misses and Wade charges smack into the Tiger defense men. They both go on their ear but Wade loses the puck and the Tiger right wing nabs it and they start a three man rush down toward our nets. They look like magicians to me the way they pass the puck back and forth. Neville, the center, gets right

"JOEY" THE TRAINER

in on Tubby Clark and it looks like a sure score but the puck bounces off one of the iron uprights.

"You know anything about this or are you just lookin' at it, Joey?"

I look around and see Midget McGrath is sittin' next to me on the bench.

"I don't know too damn much about it," I admits.

He grunts. "You are now about to see a rush by what is supposed to be the best front line in hockey," he says, as Red Simmons picks up the puck on the back boards and starts down the left alley. Joe Nelson is going up the center and on the right boards is another guy wearin' a baseball cap like Clark's.

"That," said the Midget dryly, "is James Dinsmore Hatter—known hereabouts as The Mad Hatter, and when better hockey is played the Hatter will play it."

This front line is on center ice now. Simmons flips the rubber to Joe Nelson, and then Nelson sends it back to Simmons right under the stick of the Tiger center. Suddenly the Hatter, who has been skatin' along lookin' casual as a promenader on Fifth Avenue, shoots in like a streak in front of the Tiger cage.

"Got 'em!" says the Midget.

But Simmons' pass is four feet in back of the Hatter, and while he doubles himself up in a bowknot and takes a back handed cut at the goal, it's no soap. Little Thomas of the Tigers sneaks the puck and goes racing down center ice toward our goal. The Midget is swearing.

"What do they call him The *Mad* Hatter for?" I asks. "Is he a sorehead?"

The Midget gives me a funny look and just shakes his head.

"Goofy?" I asks.

"I guess you don't know your 'Alice in Wonderland,'" says the Midget.

"What?"

"Skip it," says the Midget, with a little sigh.

HOCKEY is a lot different to watch than baseball or football. In them games each play may have a direct bearing on a score that comes later. But in hockey, the action is more continuous but each play is more or less complete in itself, if you see what I mean. A guy goes down the ice with a puck, takes a shot at the goal, and that's that. Where the fun comes in is the terrific speed of the boys, the constant fierce body contacts that make even football look a

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little tame, clever work with the stick, and of course slick team-work. And then there's something Raph Jones said to me later that I ain't ever forgot.

"There's always a chance in this game of a little modified mayhem, Joey," he tells me. "That's what keeps the fans on edge. Crises come up fast in a hockey game, and each player has man's natural weapon, a club, in his hands. The game is played at top speed all the time, and when a brawl starts it has the same tempo. You're apt to see some beautiful split domes before they're through with this job."

And I did.

Well, I'm watchin' our front line make another rush down toward the Tiger goal. The Midget, sittin' next to me, is wigglin' around in his seat.

"We gotta get this game, Joey," he says.

"Yeah? What's the stakes?" I ask him.

"Just this," he says. "There's only three more games after this on our regular schedule and we ain't clinched our Stanley Cup playoff chance yet. The Tigers are the softest outfit we got left, and we need one game to be sure we're in. After tonight we play the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Chicago Black Hawks, and The Marauders—the three toughest teams in the league. And the way we're goin' we'd better take the Tigers tonight if we want to go places."

Well, he no sooner says this than things start to go blooey down on the ice. Biff Wade starts makin' another of his bull-like rushes. The crowd goes crazy when this big boy gets rollin', but this time the Tiger defense men, King and Seaver, give him the business, and give it to him plenty. Wade goes down like a ton of bricks and Seaver on top of him with the butt end of his stick jabbin' Biff hard in the ribs. The referee misses this and Seaver gets up and skates off lookin' as innocent as a kid on his way to Sunday School. Wade gets up and you can see he's boilin' mad the way his neck is red.

Well, a few minutes later Seaver teams up with Neville and Burns in a three-man rush on our net. Seaver brings the puck into our defense zone and Biff Wade goes for him.

"Fool!" I hear the Midget growl.

Seaver flips the puck to Neville just before Biff Wade threw a body check into him that I thought was going to break his back. Meanwhile, with the crowd screamin' bloody murder, Neville and Burns flim-flam Jackson, our other defense man, and Burns slips one past Tubby Clark for the first goal of the evenin'. And the referee thumbs Wade off the ice for a five-minute penalty.

So we're one man short, and I hear Old Tom Cutler hammerin' on the side boards with the butt of a stick. The Vikings' second line of Jo Jo Smith, Ed Carey, and Maury Zarakov relieve the first line.

"They call 'em the kid line," says the Midget. "They'll be hot stuff in another year."

Well, the kids skate circles around the Tigers' second line, but they don't get any real shot at the goal. Then just as Biff Wade's penalty time is up, Seaver trips up little Zarakov and he gets a penalty. Right away Old Tom sends back the first line and puts Stover in Wade's place at defense. Stover is listed as a forward, but I see the gag, on account of we start sendin' four men down the ice, with the crowd yelling hysterically as the Hatter

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drives a vicious one at Perrault, the Tiger goalie. Perrault makes a swell save, but Red Simmons picks up the rebound and jams another one at him. Once more Perrault saves and there's a hell of a scramble in front of the net, with everyone diggin' for the rubber.

Out of it shoots Thomas, the Tiger right wing, with the puck on his stick and skating like a fool down the ice. Neville is right with him and once more they get around Jackson, and Clark doesn't have a Chinaman's chance to save when Thomas drills one into the string. Right after that the bell rings and the period's over with the Vikings trailin' 2-0.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOAL THAT FAILED.

THE boys troop into the dressing room and I follow Old Tom. Before the door closes on 'em that gang starts grouchin' and grumblin' to beat hell.

"They must call you Stonewall Jackson on account of what your head is made out of," Tubby Clark snaps at the big defense man. "Any goalie playin' back of you mugs would look like a rank amateur!"

"What you need is a fish net in there," Jackson says. "It was a crime the way you let that last one by you. You should have stopped that one blindfolded."

Some of the boys is stretched out on the benches, and I get the trainer's stuff out of a closet in the corner. Biff Wade has the skin tore on his stomach where Seaver dug his stick in and I fix that up for him. Then this Red Simmons complains about a cramp in his leg and I go over and start to work on him. While I'm kneadin' the muscles of his calf the Midget strolls over.

"That was one helluva pass you made to the Hatter on the first rush down the ice," he says to Simmons. "You had Perrault cold there if you hadn't foozled that pass. You're losin' your touch, Red. Or can it be," and the Midget's voice has a knife edge on it, "you're just trying to make things look worse than they really are?"

Simmons sits up on the bench and those pale blue eyes of his are cold as the South Pole. "Just what are you driving at, Midget?"

"Hadn't you heard?" asks the Midget, airy like. "They say you're in line to be the next boss of this outfit . . . when Old Man Cutler decides to step down. You wouldn't be tryin' to hurry things along, would you, Red?"

Simmons starts to get up, and I can feel his muscles are tense.

"I can't rub this cramp out unless you relax," I tell him.

The Midget hasn't moved an inch. He's just standin' there smilin', and it ain't the friendliest smile I ever see. Then Simmons relaxes, but I see some of the color has faded out of his face.

"If you ever make a crack like that again, Midget," he says, "I'll wipe that smile off your face permanently. And I don't mean maybe."

The Midget don't move an inch. "I just want to tell you, Red, that if any of us got the idea you *were* laying down on us, you might not ever be a manager. And that would break your heart, wouldn't it, Red? And think how that would bust up Mitzi! She's been countin' on it quite a lot."

"Keep my wife's name out of this," snarls Simmons.

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"If you'd try playing a little hockey for a change," says the Midget, "I wouldn't even bother you by speakin' to you." And he strolls off.

I can feel Simmons tremblin', he's so mad. I guess he had to take out how he felt on someone so he hollers for young Stover.

This Stover is playin' his first year of big time hockey. He's a Dartmouth boy that made a big name for himself as a football and hockey player in school. He's a nice lookin' kid, and everyone figures he'll be a star some day, but he's still a bit green.

"Those four-man rushes aren't just to give the birds in the second balcony a kick," Simmons tells him. "If you'd back checked the way you should they wouldn't have got that last goal."

"The way we worked that play out in practice," says Stover, quiet, "Nelson and I are supposed to go right in on the net to pick up the rebound. You and the Hatter are supposed to do the back-checking."

"You don't have to tell me what my job is," Simmons says, nasty like. "I don't know what the hell the old man sent you out there for, anyway. We need an experienced man in a situation like that. After this, remember you're not out there to give the girls a thrill looking at your profile!"

ALL this kind of talk got me goofy. You'd expect these guys to be encouragin' each other instead of crabbin' the way they do. I finish with Simmons and the Hatter calls to me to come over and give his legs a goin' over. He's on a bench near the door, and just as I start workin' on him a man comes in. He's a little, short, plump guy, with a big white carnation in the lapel of his dinner coat. He's about fifty-five or sixty with a little, waxed mustache, and he's smilin' a kind of a sick smile. Old Tom comes over to him.

"Good evening, Colonel," he says.

"Not such a good first period, Tom, eh? Not so good," says the little guy, rubbin' his hands together. I figure this is Colonel Matson, the owner, who signs the pay checks and takes the headaches when the box office isn't so hot.

"It's still a hockey game, Colonel," says Old Tom.

"I—I'd like to say a word to the boys, if it's all right with you, Tom," says Colonel Matson.

"Certainly, Colonel." And Old Tom raps on one of the lockers till everyone is listenin'.

"Well, boys," says the Colonel, nervous like, "I'd give a lot to see you win this game tonight. I guess we'd all like to get the suspense over with, eh? Be sure of the play-off checks, eh? Of course I have every confidence you'll pick up the game you need . . . but just the same, if you got this one tonight, we'd—ah—be off the anxious seat, as it were, eh? Eh, Tom?"

"That's right, Colonel," says Old Tom. His voice sounds kind of dead, like he's heard this sort of hooey before.

The Colonel is lookin' at me. "Ah," he says. "New face, isn't it, Tom? Where's Wilson?"

"Wilson came down with the measles two days ago, Colonel. This is Joey Martin, who's going to fill out the balance of the season for us."

"Glad to see you, Martin," says the Colonel; "glad to see you. Maybe you'll bring us good luck, eh, Martin? Eh, Tom? We could stand a little good luck, eh? Ha, ha! Well, so long, boys. Put me out of my misery by winning this game tonight, eh?

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That's the idea. Fine, fine! Well, good-by." And he goes out. He acts nuts to me.

Then the bell rings. The room is quiet for a minute and I see Old Tom's steady gray eyes lookin' from one to the other of the players. He looks kind of grim and hard.

"We don't need luck to win this game," he says in a low voice. "All we need is a little hockey. *Have you got any in you?*" And then he turns on his heel and walks out.

For a moment nobody speaks. I guess the way Old Tom said that was kind of a shock. Then Simmons gets up.

"Come on," he says, surly. And they file out, Clark first, then Simmons, then the rest in regular order.

WELL, before the next period was two minutes old I began to see some fireworks—and to catch on why Midget McGrath is just about the most popular hockey player in the league.

Old Tom starts his regular front line, and they make two or three rushes down the ice without givin' Perrault a hard one to stop. The Tigers don't do no better, and none of the boys is playin' very hard. Then Simmons goes down on a solo rush, manages to jam the puck clear around behind the Tigers' net, and damn near slips the rubber in past Perrault. But just at the crucial moment this rough-neck Seaver piles into him and crashes him into the boards. The referee blows his whistle and Seaver goes off for a penalty, but he's grinning on account of he saved a sure score. Simmons looks kind of groggy and Old Tom bangs on the boards and waves him in, and for the first time the Midget goes into the game.

Gosh, he no sooner steps on the ice than that Garden crowd starts to yell . . . some of 'em clappin', some of 'em booin' good natured. The Midget shakes hands with himself like a prize fighter and everybody laughs. The Hatter has the puck and he swings around behind our net to get up steam and then he comes tearin' down the right boards. Boy, how he can skate! The Midget teams up with him and just past center ice the Hatter slips him the disk and the Midget tries to feint King, the Tiger defense man, out of position. But King nails him with a mean body check and the Midget goes down . . . and turns a complete somersault. The crowd goes crazy, on account of they love to see this little pint size guy mix it up with the big boys. You see, the Midget is well past thirty, and Old Tom don't use him except in special spots.

The Midget picks himself up and begins clowning as though he's punch drunk. Skatin' wobbly like with his knees bucklin' under him. The crowd is cheerin' and yellin' cracks at him. Meanwhile Thomas of the Tigers has picked up the puck off the back boards and starts steamin' down center ice. The Midget, skatin' slow in the same direction, is still clownin' as though he don't know Thomas is comin' right up behind him. Then, quick as a flash, the Midget turns, hooks the puck right off Thomas's stick, and sprints for the Tiger goal. King and Neville, who are playin' back, are caught completely off guard and the Midget tears right in between 'em and sends a rifle bullet shot at Perrault. Perrault makes a great save but the Midget pounces on his own rebound and jams the puck past Perrault for a score!

The place goes nuts after that. The Midget skates nonchalantly up the

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ice, and the band starts playin' "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze." The crowd is yellin' and throwin' torn newspapers down on the ice, and the attendants have to come out and clean off the ice before they can go on playin'.

Well, for the next minute the Midget, the Hatter and Joe Nelson put a jam on the Tiger net, but they can't beat Perrault again and then Seaver comes out of the penalty box and things is evened up. Old Tom sends out the kid line and the place gives the Midget an ovation as he climbs back onto the bench.

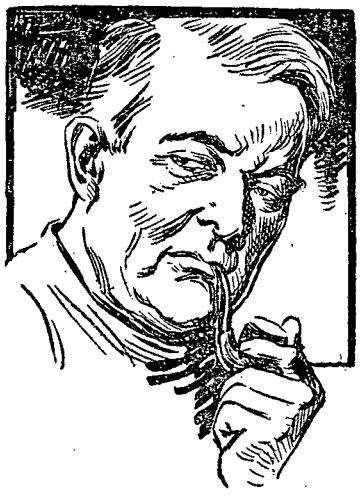
"Nice goin'," I says to him.

He grins. "We'll tuck this one away yet," he says.

But they can't make a dent in Perrault the rest of that period and just before the end of it Biff Wade takes up his private war with Seaver and tried to hang a slug on his chin. The referee breaks it up and Wade goes off for five minutes again . . . which five minutes have to be served the start of the third period on account the gong rings just as he's skatin' for the penalty box.

SO we're short handed to start the third and the Tigers keep swarmin' on Tubby Clark. Some swell poke checkin' by Joe Nelson—they say him and Aurel Joliat is the best in the business at this—and a couple of hair raisin' saves by Tubby himself keep 'em from scorin'. Old Tom tries his first line, the kid line, and a third line made up of the Midget, Stover, and a black haired Canuck named Larue that's fresh out of the Can-Am League, but the Tigers is layin' back and playin' a defensive game to hold their lead.

Finally, with about two minutes to play, the Old Man sends in his first line and puts in the Midget and Stover on the defense. There's five forwards out there and they start a whirlwind attack like you never saw in your life. The Hatter was goin' like a lunatic. He tears down the ice like crazy, takes a shot, and then back pedals so fast he'd be right on top of whichever Tiger tried to bring the puck out. The Tigers start sendin' the puck for a ride



TOM CUTLER

down the ice each time they get it, so one of our boys would lay back and come streakin' back with it into the attackin' zone. The crowd is on its feet and the seconds is tickin' off on the clock, and the place is so full of noise you can't hear yourself shoutin' at the top of your lungs.

Again and again the Hatter storms in there like he's gonna carry the puck right through the Ninth Avenue end of the Garden. This Perrault is a wizard, and Seaver and King and the others are playin' with their tongues hangin' out. But there's only forty seconds left. Down go the Midget, Nelson and the Hatter in a last desperate rush

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—passin' the rubber between 'em. Right in front of Perrault the Midget slams the puck at him. It bounces off his pads and the Hatter is on it—he slams it smack into the string. The red light goes up! But the referee is blowing his whistle, and he's pointin' a finger at Joe Nelson! Two minutes for hooking, and the goal doesn't count. And before we can organize another rush the game is over and we're sunk two to one.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROPOSITION.

IF you don't know much about hockey it's pretty hard to tell when a team ain't at its best in a close game like this. But afterwards I begin to get the drift. In the first place the Tigers ain't the toughest team in the league by a long shot, though Perrault is one of the best goalies. In the second place both the goals they score is on account of mistakes by our defense. And in the third place both the goals we score—the one that counted and the one that didn't—was on account of individual work by the Midget and the Hatter. No team play.

In the locker room nobody has a word to say. The boys are just takin' their showers and gettin' into their street clothes and scrammin'. Six straight losses is a pretty stiff dose for any team to take, particularly one that figures to have a championship shot. And I remember the Midget tells me the next three games is against the stiffest opposition in the league. Right now I guess the boys are wondering if they could take Public School No. 56 if they had to!

The only grouch I hear is from Red Simmons. "That was a hell of a time to foul someone," he says to Joe Nelson. Nelson don't say anythin' and his eyes look kind of red like he's so mad he's been bawlin'.

Old Tom don't show up in the locker room at all, so when I get through there I slip down the hall to his office. He's sittin' at his desk, that pipe stuck in tight between his teeth, drawin' pictures on a pad of paper.

"I just wanted to get straight on my duties, Mr. Cutler," I says.

He looks up like he hadn't heard me come in. "Oh, it's you, Joey," he said. "Well, what'd you think of it?"

"I figure I lost about five pounds watchin' it," I says. "It certainly packs plenty of punch, this here now puck pushin'. I wouldn't worry too much about winnin' one of the next three. You gotta win one, just on the law of averages."

"I wish I thought so," he says. Then after a minute: "You know, Joey, you can't steam up a professional crowd the way you can a college team. The die-for-dear-old-Rutgers spirit isn't there. Each one of these guys thinks he's a top shot, and if things go wrong he blames it on someone else. When they start down the skids, the law of averages or nothing else is going to work for them. You heard the way they're barking at each other?"

"Yeah," I says.

"Of course you take players like the Midget and Hatter; they have a kind of competitive fire that nothing quenches. But they can't carry the team on their backs. Joey, unless there's some way to get these birds playing back in their regular form as a team, we're sunk. Toronto and Chicago are tough, even if we're at our best. And the Marauders are the bunch we have to beat out for the playoffs. They've been coming like a house

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afire the last month. If it hadn't been for early season injuries they'd have been way out in front."

"Gee, if there's anything I can do, Mr. Cutler . . ."

He laughs kind of short. "I've tried everything I know, Joey," he says. "I'm down to the point of trying to make them so mad at me that they'll win just to spite me!" He laughs again. "That's a hell of a note, isn't it? Well, you can hit the hay now. I've arranged for a room for you at the Lincoln. You'll find Midget McGrath next door to you and he'll put you wise to the ropes. We take a noon train for Toronto tomorrow. Good night, Joey."

"Good night, Mr. Cutler," I says. He suddenly looks kind of tired and old. "Say, if a good kick in the pants will do any of these guys any good—" I says.

He laughs again, and this time it sounds warm. "If you should happen to," he says, "add a little extra punch for me! Good night, Joey."

WELL, I scram out of there and make for the Forty-ninth Street exit. I'm just out on the street when I see a guy standin' there smoking a cigarette. He comes right over to me, and you could of knocked me over with a feather when I see it's Red Simmons.

"Hello, Martin," he says.

"Hello," I says, not too friendly on account of already I don't like this mug.

"I was waitin' for you," he says.

"Yeah?"

"Yes. How about coming over to Luigi's with me for a sandwich and a cup of coffee?"

"I was just goin' down to my hotel to get set there," I says. "I ain't checked in yet, and it's gettin' late." I don't hanker after no tête-à-tête with this Simmons. But he's strugglin' awful hard to make his face look like he was a good guy.

"I really want to have a little talk with you, Martin," he says. "I won't keep you long."

I'm on the point of tellin' him to go chase himself, but he's got me curious. So I tell him what the hell, and he leads the way across the street to a kind of a chop house. There's a bar in it and a lot of tables with checkered cloths on 'em. He takes me right down to a table where a doll is sittin'. Boy, she's hot stuff in a sort of chorus girl way, if you get me. Flashy, if you see what I mean, with a little black hat cocked over to one side of her head, and bright red lips and sparklin' eyes. She gives me a smile that would of melted the ice right out of the Garden.

"This is my wife, Mitzi," says Red Simmons.

"Please to meetcha," I says.

"Sit down, Mr. Martin, sit down!" says Mitzi Simmons. "Red's been telling me about you. I must have seen you at a lot of football games, only of course I didn't know it."

"Sure," I says. I'm wonderin' what these two is after.

"I've ordered three highballs," she says. "We ought to drink to the Vikings getting in the playoffs."

SIMMONS gives her a kind of funny look. "You know Old Tom won't stand for our drinking any hard liquor during the season," he says.

Mitzi looks kind of bewildered, and I'm laughin' to myself. I wonder if Simmons figures he's puttin' anythin' over on me. "A little beer will suit me anyhow," I says.

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They start talkin' about the game and pretty soon some beer and sandwiches come up, and all the time I can see Simmons is waitin' around to it.

"You know Old Tom a long time?" he asks.

"Never met him before tonight," I says. "But he's a pal of my boss up at the college."

"I see," says Red, thoughtful like. "I guess you think he's a pretty fine fellow."

"Best ever," I says. "What's the gag?"

He leans forward on the table. "Only this," he says. "I guess you realize that things are in kind of a mess with the Vikings. The team isn't going, and to be quite frank with you, Martin, it's not the players' fault."

"They're the ones that do the skatin', ain't they?" I asks.

"Sure, but that's not everything," he says. "Old Tom has been in the game a long time, and—well, he just hasn't got the stuff he used to have. The result is that everything's at sixes and sevens. He isn't treating the players the way he ought to . . . checking up on everything we do, criticizing our play, and one thing and another. Some of us are pretty fed up on it, Martin."

"I guess Old Tom is fed up on losin' games," I says.

Simmons' eyes are gettin' that cold, icy look in 'em and I see he's gettin' mad. "Here's what I wanted to say to you," he says, and his lips are drawn tight. "We won't stand for any spying on us, Martin. Understand? If the Old Man has hired you to act as a stool pigeon for him you better pack your things and scram back to that college of yours."

"Oh, Red, I don't think Mr. Martin would be a tale bearer," says Mitzi.

"I'm just warnin' you," says Red Simmons, "that we won't stand for it."

My own gorge is startin' to fill up. "Unless you was double-crossin' Old Tom some way," I says, "I guess you wouldn't be worryin' about stool pigeons. And under the circumstances I guess you and I don't need to do any hobnobbin' together."

"I'm just warnin' you," Red Simmons says over again.

I push back my chair and get up. "To the world you may be the best left wing in hockey," I says, "but to me you're just a punk I don't like. If you don't mind I'll buy my own beer and sandwiches on account of I wouldn't sleep good if you paid for them." I grabs up my hat and starts out. Then I turn around and let him have a last crack. "You better have that highball after I go," I says. "It wouldn't do to break your regular habits," I says.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN WITH THE SCYTHE.

WELL, I scram down Eighth Avenue to the Lincoln where the Old Man told me he had fixed up a room for me. I had checked my bag at the Grand Central before goin' to the Garden, and I figure there ain't no use goin' after it now, especially since we'll be headin' for Toronto tomorrow.

The more I think about the way this Simmons talks to me, the madder I get. Spyin'! Boy, it wouldn't take no Secret Service man to figure out just where he stood. But the whole thing seems screwy to me. I've seen a college team busted up on account of fraternity politics or some kind of scrap amongst the fellows, but these guys are

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workin' for pay checks. They stand to make a pile of extra dough if they get in the playoffs, and they're travelin' as rapid as possible in the opposite direction.

There *is* a room for me at the Lincoln, and they don't make no fuss about me not havin' any luggage on account of the Old Man has fixed things up. My room is up on the tenth floor and a bellhop takes me up. He's just openin' the door for me when I look across the hall to another room which the door is open, and I see Midget McGrath.

"Come on over, Joey," he says.

I slips the bellhop a dime and go over to the Midget's room. When I get inside I see the Hatter sittin' in an armchair, smokin' a pipe that's got a bowl on it as big as an orange. He don't say nothin', just sort of waves at me and grunts. I sit down on the bed on account of there ain't any other chair, and the Midget pours me a bottle of beer. Then the Midget sits down on the edge of the table.

"How!" he says. And we all sip our beer.

"What do you think of hockey, Joey?" the Midget asks.

"The ice is lovely and smooth," I says, draggin' out a butt and lightin' it, "the band plays good, the referees blow their whistles loud, but what the hell's the matter with your club?" I says.

"Not clickin'," says the Midget.

"Nuts," I says. "There's a lot more to it than that." And I tell about my run-in with Simmons. I notice the Hatter watchin' me close all the time I'm talkin', but he don't make any remarks when I get through.

"That louse!" says the Midget. He starts walkin' up and down the room and I can see his jaw muscles ripplin'. He looks even smaller off the ice than on it. "He's been tryin' to undermine Old Tom all season," he says. "You see, Joey, Red Simmons is sort of the Babe Ruth of hockey. The only difference is the Babe is a great guy and Simmons is a rat. He's been right up in the top flight of players for about ten years, and he's got color, and a flair for publicity. Well, he's lookin' for a chance to manage a club, and on account of we ain't been goin' so good this year, he's tryin' to put the skids under Old Tom . . . who knows more about hockey than three Red Simmonses."

"I got all that memorized," I says, "but why *ain't* the team doin' good? I was readin' Raph Jones's column on the way down in the train and he says outside of Toronto this is the strongest club, man for man, in the league."

"Simmons has got four or five guys all stirred up to where they think Old Tom is givin' 'em some kind of a raw deal," says the Midget. "Biff Wade, Stoney Jackson, and Fred Partridge on the defense, and Ed Carey and Zarakov on the kid line are all goin' around nursing a grouch. No team can get any place, Joey, with half the guys sore at each other."

THE Hatter ain't said nothin' all the while, but now he takes his big pipe out of his mouth and looks at me with a kind of funny expression in his eyes.

"You want to know the real reason why the Vikings aren't clicking?" he asks. He has a very steady, quiet kind of voice. You can't help likin' him even though he don't seem to warm up to anyone very much.

"What's your slant on it?" I asks him.

"The old man with the scythe," says

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the Hatter. And lights his pipe again.

"I don't get it," I says, puzzled. I see the Midget lookin' at him, his lips set in a firm kind of straight line.

The Hatter blows a cloud of strong smellin' smoke toward the ceiling. "We're getting old, Joey," he says quiet like. "Do you realize that Simmons and Nelson and I have been playing together as a front line for about fourteen years? Six in amateur

MIDGET McGRATH

and semi-pro hockey in Canada, and eight here in the Garden with the Vikings. Wade and Jackson and Tubby Clark and the Midget here, and old Froggy Larue are all veterans. We've been playing together for a long time, and—well, the truth of it is, Joey, we aren't as good as we used to be. I know it, the Midget here knows it, and Old Tom knows it. We can't go on forever, you know." And there was somethin' kind of sad the way he said that.

"Gee," I says, quick like, "there was nothing about the way you played tonight that'd make anybody think so, Hatter."

He gives me a quick little smile. "Thanks," he says, "but I'm not kidding myself, Joey, the way Simmons and the others are. You see, it isn't that they can't skate just as fast as they used to, or take the bumps just as easily. The trouble is up here," he says, and he taps his head. "When you're at the top of your game your reactions are all automatic. You make plays without stopping to think. It's that fine edge that goes first, Joey. It takes a fraction of a second now for me to figure out a play . . . and that fraction of a second is the difference between sinking the puck in an unprotected corner of the net and banging it up against the goalie's pads." He tamped down the ashes in his pipe. "I missed two chances late in the game tonight that I wouldn't have missed four years ago. The fans don't see it, Joey, and most of the players don't see it. It looks like tough luck to them, or great work on the part of the goalie, but the real answer is that fraction of a second that we're losing—and that we can't hope to get back!"

"Then," I says, not lookin' at him, "you don't figure we got much of a chance in these last three games?"

The Hatter shrugged. "If something were to happen, Joey, that would make us blaze away . . . well, we might win one of those three games."

Nobody says anything for a minute, and then the Midget slips down off the table. "Let's have another beer," he says, and his voice sounds hoarse.

CHAPTER VII.

MASSACRE.

MAYBE I ought to draw a veil over that Toronto game, as the sayin' goes. There's a lot of smart hockey men will tell you this

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present Maple Leaf team is not only the best in hockey today, but the best of all time. Well, what I see at the Maple Leaf Gardens, which is where the Toronto home ice is, convinces me without no argument whatever. When Jackson, Conacher, Primeau, King Clancy, Red Horner, Hal Cotton and the rest of that bunch get rollin' it's just a question of how much, not who's goin' to win. And this Hainsworth in the nets is cooler than the ice itself. He's won the George Vezina trophy for bein' the best goalie in the league three or four times. Well, at eleven that night, the New York Vikings are on the short end of the worst beatin' any team has took all season in the National Hockey League!

And that ain't the worst of it. Along toward the end of the first period there's a mix-up near the Toronto nets and three or four guys go sprawlin' on the ice. Joe Nelson is one of 'em and when he gets up he's got a fractured wrist and is out for the season! That busts up our front line and makes things look worse than ever for the last two games with Chicago and the Marauders. Nelson is a playmaker—the spark plug of that front line. Midget McGrath fills in for him the rest of the Toronto game but you can't tell nothin' about how he'll work there in a landslide like this. The score is 3-1 when Nelson is hurt, and we're still in the fight. But after he goes off it seems like the Maple Leafs can score any time they feel like it. Biff Wade and the rest of the defense men don't seem anxious to take any too much punishment, and in a way I don't blame 'em. We haven't got a Chinaman's chance of coppin' this one now, and they might just as well save some of their stuff for the next one. Only it's kind of a gyp on the customers who pay to see a hockey game, which this is more like watchin' a guy knock over ninepins.

All durin' the game Old Tom sits on the bench, his chin sunk down on his chest, lookin' like his whole body is kind of shrunk up in his clothes. I guess there couldn't be no bitterer pill for the old boy to swallow than to see his team quit the way they do in this game. There's a lot of managers would let off a blast about it in the papers, but not Old Tom. You see, for years he has been the spirit, the backbone of this club. He must of felt just like a guy who has to stand by and watch his house burn down without no water to put it out.

The last sock in the teeth comes to him when I and he are standin' on the platform at the Toronto station and some of the local newspaper boys come up to him.

"Any truth in the rumor that you're going to retire before the season's over, Mr. Cutler?" one of 'em asks.

Old Tom's hands is sunk deep in his overcoat pockets, and it don't take much of a mind reader to guess that they're clinched awful hard and tight. But his voice is quiet and steady, with a kind of a dry, humorous quality in it.

"I may be fired, gentlemen," he says, "but I don't plan retiring."

Everybody laughs, like the idea of Old Tom bein' fired is crazy, only the laughter sounds kind of forced.

"How do you account for the crack-up of your club, Mr. Cutler?"

"Bad breaks," says Old Tom, cool as a cucumber.

"Do you think with Nelson out you have a chance to win either of your last two games?"

"I think for a game or two McGrath or someone else will be able to fill his place capably," says Old Tom.

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Another one of these wise pen pushers speaks up. "Is it true, Mr. Cutler, that the Vikings are riddled by dissension?"

"When a team's in a losing streak," says Old Tom, "there's bound to be a little grouching and growling. All we need is a few goals to forget all about our troubles. And now, gentlemen, if you'll excuse me—"

WALTZIN' down the platform is Colonel Matson, bundled up in a big fur coat, his mustache waxed and bristlin', lookin' dapper and pleased as hell with himself, and hangin' on his arm, red lipped, pert, smilin', is Mitzi Simmons. She's makin' eyes at him and actin' like they was the best pals in the world. The Colonel looks a little embarrassed when he sees Old Tom.

"Tough luck, eh, Tom?" he says. "Damnable luck, Nelson being hurt and all! Sort of took the heart out of the boys, eh? Rotten shame!"

Old Tom just nods. He don't say nothin', and I see him lookin' at Mitzi Simmons who looks pleased enough with herself to bust. She lifts her face up to the Colonel and says somethin' we can't none of us hear. The Colonel looks kind of embarrassed, and starts tuggin' at his mustache.

"Ah—oh—yes! By the way, Tom, drop into my office in the morning, will you?" he says. He don't make a very good job of soundin' casual. Mitzi Simmons is grinnin' like a tooth paste ad. Right then and there I could have given her one right in the mush, dame or no dame. It certainly looked like the works for Old Tom, and to dish it out to him in front of these newspaper men. Well, I always say a schemin' woman is the lowest form of animal life.

But Old Tom don't bat an eyelash. "I have called a practice session for tomorrow morning, Colonel," he says. "With the Chicago game day after tomorrow we've got to work out some new combination for our front line. Perhaps it would do just as well if you saw me after that session."

"Eh? Oh, certainly, Tom, certainly. Nothing very vital, you understand," and this little stuffed shirt laughs kind of nervous. I see Mitzi Simmons' eyes is suddenly kind of dark and stormy lookin'.

"Oh, Mr. Cutler," she says, "a practice session the morning after a hard game like this?"

"I guess there ain't anybody very bruised up," I snaps, "the way they was sidesteppin' them Toronto forwards tonight."

"I guess you don't realize how much it takes out of one to play a hockey game, Mr. Martin," she says. She's havin' a hard time not to bust out in some good old Anglo-Saxon words.

"Was that a hockey game tonight?" I asks, innocent.

She turns to Colonel Matson and she's blazin'. "I think it would be pleasanter to board the train, Colonel," she says.

"Ah—uh—yes," he stutters. "See you after the practice tomorrow, eh Tom?" And he takes the dame onto the train.

I pick up Old Tom's bag and my own. "Let's go," I says, not wantin' to trust myself not to explode in front of them newspaper men. That little twist tryin' to give Old Tom the business by shinin' up to Matson! Boy!

OLD TOM hadn't missed no trick in the whole business, and he looks all in as he sits down in the corner of his drawin' room and

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fumbles for his pipe. I throw his bag up in the rack and then I sit down acrost from him.

"Why don't you spill the beans to the papers and quit?" I ask him.

He gives me a funny look. "What beans, Joey?" he asks.

"Listen," I says. "I'm wise to what's wrong with this club. This Simmons and the others are tryin' to get you to take the rap for somethin' that ain't your fault." Then I tells him about what the Hatter has told me. Old Tom's face softens a little.

"That old son of a gun!" he says, when I'm finished. "I knew he was the smartest hockey player in the business, but I didn't know he was that smart, Joey. Most of the boys don't get wise to it when they're slippin'."

"That's no reason why your reputation should be kicked around," I says.

Old Tom leans back in his seat and lights his pipe. "I'm not going to quit, Joey," he says. "I'm not going to get fired if I can possibly help it. And I can't give the papers the real dope because it would sound like sour grapes after the talk that's been going around. But this club means a lot to me, Joey—more than a few individual players on it. Hockey is my life, and the Vikings are my club—have been from the very start. Maybe you can't understand that, but—"

"I understand," I says, "but it burns me up to see you gettin' the business."

"If we can just squeeze into the playoffs," he says, "then before next year we can start rebuilding. But if we miss the playoffs, well, I'm afraid they won't give me the chance."

"They can pep an old race horse for one go," I says, "by hoppin' him up. Maybe you can do the same thing with a hockey club," I says.

Old Tom closes his eyes. "Joey, I've got a headache from trying to figure out a way. Right now I can't see it. But I've *got* to do it. I've *got* to!"

I don't say nothin' on account of I don't feel too optimistic. He's got to find a way—but he's got to find it in just five days. Because after that it will be all over.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HAPPY FAMILY.

IT'S a pretty sullen bunch of guys that collect in the Viking locker room at the Garden about eleven the next mornin'. A practice session at this stage of the season wouldn't be popular on no account, and with things the way they are it ain't no better. When everyone is dressed for play Old Tom, who's on skates too, gives 'em a short spiel.

"Chicago tomorrow night, and Chicago is tough," says the Old Man. "I've got nothing to say about that massacre last night. I didn't expect you to win that game, and if you like to let yourselves be made ridiculous by allowing a top-heavy score to be run up against you that is your lookout."

"There was no use gettin' all busted up when we couldn't win," says Biff Wade, sullen.

"Forget it," says Old Tom. "Now about our present problem—to fill Joe Nelson's place in the front line. I'm not going to move up Ed Carey from the kid line. There's no use disrupting two forward walls. And I've decided not to use the Midget. We need him for special spots. That leaves it up to you, Stover. I think you can do the job."

The Dartmouth kid flushes, kind of. "I'll do my best, sir."

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Red Simmons' skates clatter on the floor. "For Pete's sake, Tom, have you gone nuts?" he snarls. "Putting an inexperienced greenhorn like Stover in such a critical spot?"

"I haven't noticed that our experienced players are doing so well," says Old Tom, quiet like. "Maybe Stover is just the medicine we need up front. I know I can count on his giving his best, at any rate."

Well, there's a kid goalie who plays with St. Nick's, an amateur club there to help out with the practice. After the boys have skated around a bit Old Tom, who's playin' the part of referee, calls 'em together. The regulars, Biff Wade, Stonewall Jackson, Simmons, the Hatter, and Stover line up in front of this amateur goalie. Partridge, Carroll, and the kid line work in front of Tubby Clark.

"No offensive hockey from you guys," says Old Tom to this last bunch. "I want the first line to make most of the rushes."

So there's a face-off in the center. Stover gets the best of it and the puck goes back to Simmons and he starts down the ice with it. Carroll fades him off toward the boards and right away trouble starts. Stover is in a perfect spot to take a pass from Red but instead this all-American palooka tried to bull his way past Carroll and the play is broke up. Midget, La Rue, and I is the only ones on the bench.

"That bum is goin' to make Stover look just as bad as he can," says the Midget. "If I was Old Tom I'd fine him fifty bucks for that play and suspend him for the rest of the season."

WELL, I know why Old Tom can't do that. Simmons would be hollerin' all over town it was on account of spite. Maury Zarakov of the kid line takes the puck to center ice and then golfs a long one for the nets which the amateur goalie clears. Then the Hatter starts down with the puck. He and Stover pass the puck back and forth to each other pretty as you please, flimflam Partridge, and the Hatter drives one at Tubby Clark. Tubby clears but Stover picks up the rebound and flicks the rubber into the net. The kid looked awful good on that play.

The Midget hammers on the boards with his stick.

"Nice goin', fella," he says as Stover skates back to center ice.

Stover grins at him and goes back to work. Well, they start down the ice with the puck once more. Stover has it and he manages to get loose from Ed Carey who's back-checkin' him, and flicks the puck across to Simmons. Red is just a shade too slow and Jo-Jo Smith hooks the puck away from him before he can take a shot. Red Simmons' face looks like a cooked beet.

"What the hell are you trying to do?" he yells at Stover. "Pass the puck too far in front of me just to make me look bad?"

"Cut that stuff out, Red!" Old Tom's voice cracks like a whiplash.

Simmons skates back to his position lookin' sullen and I can see the muscles ripplin' under Stover's jaw. Biff Wade hollers up at him as Old Tom organizes another face-off in center ice.

"Never mind the swell headed stuff, Stover. Just play hockey," Biff says.

"Yeah," growls Red Simmons.

Well, this time Ed Carey beats Stover on the face-off and the kid line puts on a rush which Biff Wade and Jackson bust up and Biff starts on one of those mad bull rushes of his. Stover

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and Red Simmons go chasin' down on either side of him. In over the blue line Biff takes a shot which Tubby clears easy. Red Simmons, playin' the kind of hockey he can if he wants to, was on this rebound quick and slams it at Clark. This one bounces out toward Stover and the kid is about to shoot with the net wide open when Simmons barges into him and they take one hell of a spill.

Quick as a flash Simmons is up, slams his stick down on the ice, and with Stover still down on one knee, Red busts the kid one on the jaw.

"Try to mess up every play I'm in, you big-headed punk!"

Hell breaks loose for a minute, then and there. The Midget and LaRue scramble over the boards to the ice and all the players go rushin' to the center for action. Stover, who was knocked flat, is up quick, and from the way he handles himself I stop worrying about him. He jabs Simmons a short one in the belly and then knocks him clear across the rink with a haymaker right on the button. And then, before Stover can cover up, Biff Wade knocks him cold with one behind the ear. Then the Hatter slams Biff and the sticks fly.

It's five minutes before things get stopped. Stover and Simmons are both groggy. Biff Wade's got a six-inch cut along the side of his head where a stick cut him. The Midget's nose is bleedin', but from the look of the knuckles on his right hand someone else had paid.

CHAPTER IX.

COUNCIL OF WAR.

WELL, it ain't till we stop to bury our dead, as you might say, that I see this isn't a strictly private fight on account of there's been some spectators. And when I see who they are I don't like the look of things for a damn. I'm helpin' young Stover off the ice when I see Colonel Matson, Mitzi Simmons, and Raphael Jones standin' in one of the boxes. The dame is talkin' the Colonel's ear off, and Raph Jones is standin' there with a kind of a funny smile on his lips. Trust a newspaper man to have his nose into somethin'!

Everybody is sore as hell in the locker room. The Garden doctor is puttin' stitches in Biff Wade's head and generally lookin' after cuts and bruises. Nobody is sayin' anythin' much, but everybody looks like he is a thunderstorm brewin'. In the middle of this Raph Jones strolls in.

"Too bad you boys couldn't put some of this fine frenzy into your league games," he drawls. "The customers would pay money to see you get really steamed up."

Old Tom comes over to him. "I'd be just as glad if you'd keep this mess out of your column, Raph," he says.

Raphael Jones gives a queer look. "Okay, Tom," he says. "As a matter of fact I never print anything that happens when I'm a specially invited guest. You see, the Colonel told me there would be some sort of special announcement after the practice this morning. Know what it's about?"

Old Tom's teeth are gritted tight. "I can make a good guess," he says.

Raph lights a cigarette, keepin' his eyes off Old Tom's face. "I happen to know that Mitzi Simmons is goin' to be in on the conference," says Raph. "Since it's to be a semi-public hearin' I suggest that you bring along some friend of yours, Tom. Joey, for example. A witness or two on your side won't do any harm."

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Say, that was damn swell of Raph. Old Tom gives me a twisted little smile.

"Want to be in at the death, Joey?" he asks, kind of grim.

"Death my eye!" I says. "All I want is a chanct to tell that skirt where she gets off."

Raph Jones flicks the ash from his cigarette. "The Colonel sent me down here, Tom, to say he'd like you to come at once. Shall we get on our bicycles?"

Old Tom takes a sort of tight-lipped look around the locker room. He's been the boss here ever since hockey started at the Garden. He's seen celebrations, hundreds of victories, championships. Now he sees the wreck of a once great hockey team and the curtain comin' down on himself. I guess it was a tough minute for him. Then he leads the way out with his shoulders kind of throwed back and his chin up. He could take it, Old Tom could.

We three go up to the Colonel's office. Outside the door Tom turns to me. "Wait out here, Joey," he says. "I'm going to ask the Colonel to have it out with me privately. If he refuses I'll call you in."

Well, I wait outside while he and Raph go in. There's an open transom over the door so I can hear everything that goes on anyhow.

"AH—er—Tom!" I hear Matson say. "Glad you could come up. Unfortunate, that little squabble down on the ice, eh?" Little squabble! I wonder what he'd call a volcano eruption!

"Colonel," says Old Tom, in a clear voice, "I can guess why you've sent for me. Don't you think it would be more in keeping if we talked it out in private?"

"Ah—um—ah," says Matson. "I see your point, Tom—see it quite clearly. But, Mit—that is—uh, Mrs. Simmons is in a position to give us both certain information that is important—really important. She's in closer touch with the men, Tom—closer than you and I can get as owner or manager, eh? We're sort of ogres to the men, eh, Tom? Ha, ha!"

"Since you feel that way, Colonel," says Tom, in an icy voice, "you won't mind my having someone in who is also in touch with the situation." The door opens and Tom says, "Come in, Joey."

So I come in. The Colonel is standin' back of his desk, tuggin' at that mustache of his. Mitzi is settin' in an armchair showin' more leg than the front line of a burlesque chorus.

"Ah, Martin," says the Colonel. "Glad to see you."

I just give him a wave and stand there. I can see Mitzi givin' me the eye and I figger she's kind of worried, wonderin' if I'm goin' to spill the beans about the way her and Red dished it out to me that night in the restaurant. Raph Jones is over at one of the windows lookin' down at the street as though he weren't interested in what was goin' on.

The Colonel is in a nasty spot, and from the way he keeps tuggin' at his mustache, his collar, his tie, and the lapels of his suit you can see his insides is squirmin'.

"Tom," he says, in a voice that sounds as though he was just goin' to make a political speech, "this is one of the most difficult moments of my life—one of the most difficult! Your reputation . . . your background in hockey . . . all that sort of thing . . . make what I have to say damned hard. Damned hard!"

"I guess we can dispense with the bouquets, Colonel," says Tom curtly.

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"Ah—um—of course. Can't blink at facts, eh, Tom? Must meet crises without flinching, eh? Well, no use dodging the fact that things are all wrong with the Vikings, eh, Tom? Something radical must be done to insure our getting in the playoffs. We must—er—unify the team spirit in some way." He stops to clear the frog out of his throat. "I've looked into the matter, Tom, looked into it carefully. I've—er—done a little sleuthing, as you might say. Mit—that is—er—Mrs. Simmons has explained a very regrettable situation. Her husband and most of the men feel you've been treating them unfairly, Tom. They all think—mind you I'm just quoting—they all think if someone else took over the reins for the last two games the boys might pull themselves together and win one of them."

"I see," said Old Tom slowly.

"Glad you do, Tom. Glad you do. Now the last thing in the world I want to do is hurt your pride—the last thing in the world. So I have a suggestion to make. I propose to make no public announcement of any changes, Tom. You'll sit on the bench just the same as ever. No one will know there has been any change. But the actual management of the club will be in the hands of Simmons." He spreads his hands in a little gesture that shows he's very pleased with himself. "That way everyone will be satisfied. No damage to your pride, Tom. And the players get the pilot they want."

YOU could of heard a pin drop. I open my mouth to say somethin', but, honest to God, I can't make a sound. I can't believe I've heard this little stuffed shirt right! Of all the insultin' propositions that is worst I ever hear in twenty-five years of bein' connected with sports. To suggest a thing like this to the man who's done more for hockey than any single person in the game. There isn't a drop of color in Old Tom's face.

"You're not serious, Colonel!" I wouldn't have knowed it was Old Tom's voice if I hadn't of seen his lips movin'.

"Seems like an ideal solution to me," says this little nincompoop of a tailor's dummy.

RED SIMMONS

"By God!" I shouts, but Old Tom's hand grips my arm like a steel vise.

"Of course I refuse, Colonel," says Old Tom, quiet.

The Colonel shuffles his feet. "You mean you'd rather resign, Tom? Is that it?"

Old Tom's lips are straight as a fiddle string. "I have no intention of resigning, Colonel."

"But—er—ah—look here, Tom! I'm trying to make this pleasant for everyone. It seems to me my plan leaves everyone unscathed. No one has to know about the change. No one will know. You sit on the bench and—"

I can't shut up any longer. "No one will know except all the players, this dame here, a newspaper man, everybody who sits near the Viking bench

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durin' the game. No one except the whole damn world!"

"Mr. Martin!" the Colonel blusters.

"Don't Mr. Martin me, you half-baked pouter pigeon!" I shouts at him. "Of all the low-down, yellow-bellied, cowardly schemes I ever hear in my life this takes the cake. No one will know! Before night every sporting editor in New York will know from me just what kind of a skunk you are!"

"Joey!" Old Tom is tryin' to stop me, but it ain't no use.

"I'll tell every one of 'em the cheap trick you tried to put over on Tom Cutler. I'll give 'em the real low-down on this lousy hockey club of yours. I'll tell 'em what this double-crossin' skirt and her husband have been tryin' to pull off for weeks! By the time they get through printin' what I'll have to tell 'em you'll wish to God you'd never owned a hockey club!"

"Mr. Martin, get out of my office!" the Colonel shouts.

"Nuts!" I says. "For two cents I'd throw you right out onto Eighth Avenue," I tell him.

"Mr. Martin," says Mitzi Simmons, "your behavior is incredible."

"Aw, let down your back hair, baby," I says. "You're apt to choke over one of them four syllable words!"

AND then I hear Raphael Jones laughin' and I turn around mad enough to sock him one. "What the hell is so damn funny, you baboon?" I snaps at him.

"I was just thinking how distressed my mother would be if she were to see me now," says Raphael. He's lookin' at the Colonel. "I never thought I'd turn out to be a blackmailer, Colonel Matson. But here is my first criminal act. You promised me a statement for the *Globe*. Well, I think my fine friend Joey has got you on the hip. Do you want me to print what's gone on here in this office, or will you make a statement to the press that I suggest?"

The Colonel looks as though he was goin' to bust out cryin'. "This whole affair is most distressing," he says. "Most distressing! I meant to satisfy everyone. I—"

"Satisfy!" I says. "You hit a guy below the belt and expect him to be satisfied!"

The Colonel's hands fluttered kind of helpless like. "I had you in here, Jones," he says, appealing to Raph, "because I thought you could cover this thing up properly for Tom. Now you're making threats—yes, by Jove, threats! I want to say that I won't have people telling me how to run my club!"

Raph just grins. "I'm going to cover things properly for Tom," he says. "But you can't expect me to give up the best story of the year, now can you, Colonel? The story of the worst deal ever handed to a sporting figure of Tom's magnitude? The story of how Colonel Matson was led around by the nose by a skirt? There's only one thing would make me lay off the best story of the decade, Colonel. The one thing is a square deal for Tom Cutler."

"Listen, you low-down pencil-pusher," Mitzi Simmons snaps, "you mention my name in your paper and I'll sue you for a million dollars!"

"But, Mitzi," says Raph, mockin' her, "didn't the Colonel say you were in closer touch with the men than anyone else? You're news, sweetheart! The power behind the throne." He turns to Tom. "The more I think of it, Tom, the more I'm tempted. Boy, oh, boy, the whole town will be laughing."

"Those that ain't throwin' rocks through the Colonel's windows," I says.

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The Colonel makes a noise like a dyin' fish. "What do you want me to do?" he asks.

"Just a minute," says Old Tom in a voice that shakes a little. "Raph, I appreciate what you and Joey are tryin' to do for me. But I can't hold my job by threatening my employer. I never played ball that way, and I can't now."

"I was sure Mr. Cutler would see things in the right light," says Mitzi.

"But I won't resign from this job," says Old Tom, without givin' her a look. "That would be a public admission of failure, and I don't think that I have failed. As for the Colonel's proposition, I know if he thought about it he'd see it was an impossible one."

"Meant for the best—you know that, eh, Tom?" says the Colonel.

"Colonel, I want the chance to play out my string," says Old Tom earnest like. "We've run this club together for eight years. We've had our ups and downs. Hockey is my life, Colonel, and the Vikings are my club. I'm fighting for a chance to go on with them. If I'm through here, I'm through with hockey. Well, I'll gamble my future with you, I'll write out my resignation now, to take effect immediately if we fail to make the playoffs. That's fair enough, isn't it? I don't want to be kicked out of the saddle until I've had a chance to take the last hurdle. If I don't make it, then you can turn the job over to someone else."

"You're puttin' yourself in a spot, Mr. Cutler, and you know it," I says.

"I've been in spots before, Joey," he says, quiet. "I'll take my chances."

MITZI SIMMONS' eyes are blazin'. "If the boys thought you could lead them into the playoffs, Mr. Cutler, they wouldn't want a change."

Raph Jones gives the Colonel a sour smile. "Napoleon had his Josephine, Marc Anthony his Cleopatra, and now Colonel Matson his Mitzi. It's a pity that important guys always take a tumble when they listen to women," he says.

The Colonel tugs at his mustache and looks kind of red in the face. "Everything I've considered doing has been for the best interests of the club—you know that, eh, gentlemen? I was—er—convinced," and he gives Mitzi a sort of sideways look, "that a change at this time might stir the club up. But I see this—ah—to change jockeys in mid stream is not fair to the—ah—horse, as it were. Tom, I accept your proposition. That's fair enough, eh? Fair to you . . . fair to the whole club. We can't be too sentimental, eh? Must pay off on results, eh? You should have a full chance to produce the results, Tom. I see that. A blind man could see that, eh? Ha, ha! But it's sink or swim on the next two games, eh, Tom? You win one or else I accept your resignation."

"That's okay with me, Colonel," says Tom.

"Fine, fine, fine," says the Colonel, rubbing his hands together. "Everyone satisfied, eh, Mit—ah—Mrs. Simmons?"

She looks sour. "It's your club, Colonel. I suppose you can do what you damn please with it!"

Old Tom turns to Raph. "You can say this for me in your paper, Raph. I'm staking my job, my future in hockey, on our getting in the playoffs. The Vikings have never failed me in a pinch. I don't think they will now."

Gee, there was somethin' awful proud, awful swell about the way he said it. It kind of made a guy choke up if you know what I mean. But with

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things the way they are in the club the old boy is playin' with loaded dice, and he knows it.

CHAPTER X

ICE BATTLE.

IF I'd of had a rabbit's foot, and I'd of believed in it, I guess I'd of been carryin' it the night of the Chicago game. Lord knows I'm pullin' hard for Old Tom, and so is some of the boys in the club, like the Midget, the Hatter, Stover, and one or two others, includin' old Henri Larue, the foxy frog. But I don't have to be told that Red Simmons and his pals are sorer than ever, after findin' out how close Red come to bein' manager of the club. The only thing that makes me think we got a chance is that, after all, dough is dough. Maybe these mugs will pull themselves together enough to win one on account of the extra pay checks the playoffs will bring 'em.

But the cards is stacked against us in more ways than one. This Chicago club wants to win this game, as it will put 'em in first place in the American Division of the league, so they won't be doin' no coastin'. And if we lose to them we'll be going into that last game with the Marauders with just a one point lead over them. You see, you get two points for winnin' a game, so if we lose this one to Chicago we got to beat the Marauders or be nosed out by a point. If we win, we'll be three points ahead of the Marauders and in the bag.

Well, ordinarily when a club has lost seven straight games the way we have the crowds don't turn out for 'em. But with the playoffs at stake and the sports writers feedin' the fans the idea that the Vikings is likely to come to with a big bang, the Garden is a sell-out for the Chicago game. I get to the dressing room early and get all my stuff laid out, ready to tape up ankles and help the guys get ready. They start driftin' in one by one, none of 'em sayin' much, and I can see the whole kit and kaboodle of 'em is keyed up to the breakin' point.

Simmons looks like a thundercloud when he comes in and he gives me the cold shoulder complete. I guess Mitzi told him how I told the Colonel where to head in and Red don't like me no better on that account. Well, what with Red not speakin' to me or Stover or the Midget, and Biff Wade and the Hatter on the outs on account of it was the Hatter who clouted Biff in that free-for-all durin' practice, I don't think even Ed Wynn could of raised a smile out of the bunch of them.

Just before the game Old Tom comes in. He looks around for a minute or two and the place is dead quiet.

"I'd like to see the hatchet buried just long enough," he says, slow, "to see you fellows step out there tonight and play a real hockey game. I know there's a lot of personal feeling among you, but for your own sakes forget it. I'm not asking you to do anything for me. I'm not giving you a college boy pep talk. But if you miss the playoffs it's going to hit you where it hurts most —in the pocketbook. If for no other reason than that, snap out of it and play the hockey you *can* play."

THEN the bell rings and they troop out on the ice in that same order they always do. Gee, you'd think they'd of had enough of that superstition. The place is jammed right up to the roof, and when the Vikings come out the crowd starts yellin', the way a New York crowd will. They're booin' and laughin', and some of 'em

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cheerin'. There's a lot of cracks flyin' around about the seven straight losses, and some of the players, like the Midget and Henri Larue, are takin' a good-natured kiddin'.

But when the lights change and the big lamps is turned on the ice, and some dope comes out to face the puck, you can feel the whole crowd is kind of tense. Old Tom pulls an unusual one by startin' the kid line in front of Biff and Stoney Jackson. The Midget is sittin' next to me.

"This Chicago outfit always starts out with one hell of a rush," he says. "No use havin' our scorin' threats in there till they slow down a little."

Boy, I see the point of this quick. With Spencer and Seligman on the wings and little Johnny Lauren at center the Chicago front line looks almost as good to me as that Toronto bunch. And can they skate! Almost before the whistle has finished blowin' Lauren has the puck away from Ed Carey, the kid center, and he and Spencer and Seligman tear down into our defense zone, Spencer damn near takes off Tubby Clark's leg with a rifle-bullet shot before the customers had settled back in their seats. It looks like it's just good luck that Tubby clears. Seligman is on the rebound, but Stoney Jackson bumps him on his ear before he can let fly, and Biff Wade picks up the rubber and goes rip-snortin' down the ice in one of his wildman rushes. Biff is goin' good, and manages to get in there in spite of some awful fast back-checkin' by Lauren and Spencer. The two Chicago defense men are cool as cucumbers, but there's a big open space between 'em and Biff looks like he's goin' to get through right on top of Barrett, the Chicago goalie.

"Watch!" says the Midget to me, between his teeth.

He ain't got it out before Dutch Leonard and Martell, the two Chicago defense men, smear Biff. It's a sweet play. It looks like they're going to let him through, then they smack him from both sides at once. It looks like he's caught in a stone crusher! He don't even get a chance to shoot the puck, and you could of heard the thud over on Broadway when he hits the ice.

Biff gets up, givin' Dutch Leonard a red-necked argument, but Dutch only laughs at him. Meanwhile Lauren has the puck and is tearin' down the left boards. Ed Casey heads in to cut him off, but Lauren turns sharp and skates across about ten feet out from our cage as if he's goin' to take a shot from the right side. Stoney Jackson is skatin' with him—has him well covered. Then, all of a sudden, Lauren stops dead, throwin' snow up off the ice with his skates. Jackson can't stop quick enough and it's child's play for Lauren to flip the puck into the string on account of Clark has been sucked over to the right side of the net. Fifty-five seconds, and we're behind already.

WELL, the Vikings has looked bad in the two games I've been with 'em, but they start playin' some real hockey at this point. Simmons, Stover, and the Hatter go in, and I've got to hand it to Red he plays a bang-up game. He's givin' everythin' he's got, skatin' fast, checkin' hard, teamin' up good with Stover. Stover is a little shaky at first, but when he sees Red means to play ball with him he gets goin' himself. But, boy, this Chicago bunch is tough. Seligman, Spencer and Lauren is in there most of the time. They don't seem to need no relief.

You've seen a lot of games where a front line will rush the puck down, and when they lose it they don't hurry much

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gettin' it back, trustin' to their defense to bust up the other side's rush. But not this club from Chi. Spencer, and Lauren and Seligman, they're everywhere. They come tearin' in with a dazzlin' rush, and then back-check so fast that they're messin' up our counter rush before it gets past center ice.

And then toward the end of the period they have Dutch Leonard off in the penalty box for trippin' Stover, and it looks like we had a chance. Chance! Say, if you want to see some plain and fancy puck raggin', you want to see this Seligman. He skates all over hell with the puck, twistin', turnin', not lettin' our boys get hold of it. And when they do he's like a buzzin' hornet, bustin' up passes, knockin' up their sticks. Gee, it's a swell exhibition. Even the Viking fans have to give him a hand. But that don't win hockey games for *us*.

Well, between periods our gang is in a little better spirits. They've been goin' better than they have at any time in the last couple of games. I begin to get the idea they may win. But that second period is a heart-breaker. Time after time we have chances that seem like we can't miss, only to have Lauren and Seligman, or one of the others, slip through and bust it up.

"I could play defense on that club," the Midget says to me. "Those forwards break up the plays before they ever get back to the defense!"

Then we get a terrible break. There's a jam on our net and out of it comes the Hatter, streakin' like all hell down the ice with only Dutch Leonard between him and the goal. Dutch closes in and the Hatter makes a swell play around him, bouncin' the puck along the boards. Barrett, the Chicago goalie, sees he hasn't got a chance and he comes 'way out on the ice to bust up the play. He does, in a way. The Hatter's shot is blocked and the puck drifts along square in front of that open net. Boy, I'm on my feet screamin' on account of young Stover is right on it. I'm tellin' you there wasn't anything to it—a wide-open net with no one in it. *And Stover misses!* He stubs his stick somehow and don't move the puck three inches. He's overskated, and before he can turn back, that Seligman has batted the rubber out of danger. I can't remember nothin' else about that second period. Some of the starch seems to go out of the whole club, but they keep Chicago from scorin' again, all the same.

WELL, in the third period things go along all right for about five minutes, and then somethin' happens that I guess was the lowest spot in Old Tom Cutler's career. The kid line is on the ice and goin' good when Jo-Jo Smith gets smacked into the boards and opens up a big cut on his head. He has to come out and the Old Man sends out Simmons to take his place. After a couple of rushes the Old Man sends out Stover and the Hatter to relieve Ed Carey and Zarakov. I see Simmons talkin' to Stover and then to the referee. And then Stover comes skatin' back toward the bench, kind of slow, and his face is pale. Old Tom jumps up to his feet.

"What's wrong, Stover?" he snaps.

"Red told me to come back to the bench," says Stover. "Says he's captain of the team and he don't want me on the ice."

Old Tom's jaw muscles are ripplin'. "McGrath! In there for Simmons," he shouts at the Midget.

As soon as there's a face-off the Midget scrambles over the boards and skates out. We can't hear what hap-

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pens, but Simmons is red in the face and shoutin'. The Midget grabs hold of his arm, like he's goin' to bring him off the ice, and Red pulls away. He skates over toward the bench.

"Tom," he shouts. "Keep these palookas out of here! You've gone nuts sending Stover out here after that flub of his. I'm stayin' out here to see that we have the right men on the ice!" And before Old Tom can say anythin' he skates back toward the play.

I guess there wasn't never a situation like that in big league hockey before. Nobody knows what to do for a minute. It's like mutiny. And then Old Tom slips over the boards and goes slitherin' across the ice toward the referee. I guess the sight of Old Tom must have been too much for Simmons, because he gives the Old Man a shove and he falls down on the ice.

Before you can say Jack Robinson, the Hatter is off our bench skatin' straight for Simmons and slams him one. Biff Wade clinches with the Hatter and Madison Square goes crazy! They're booin' and yellin' and shoutin'. The referee finally gets things straightened out. Simmons and the Hatter get major penalties. The penalty on the Hatter acts as though he's just substituted. So when they swept up the paper off the ice and are ready to go, we've got four players on the ice. Old Tom is back on our bench, tight-lipped, white as a sheet. The Midget, Biff Wade, and Jackson are tryin' to hold the fort against the whole Chicago club. Twice the Midget gets the puck and he can do a little raggin' himself.

But in the end Chicago sends four men down the ice in a series of rushes and before the Hatter's and Simmons' time is up they've scored twice and we're sunk, 3-0. And then the Hatter and Simmons start sluggin' each other in the penalty box and the cops have to separate 'em. And then it's all over.

CHAPTER XI.

FIRE WATER.

BOY, did the papers give that game a play on the sports pages! I guess there was never anythin' like it before, and they have themself a field day over it. Raph Jones comes out with a hot crack at Simmons, tells how he's been tryin' to undermine Old Tom for weeks; accuses him of startin' dissension in the club that's put 'em on the skids; makes a public appeal to Colonel Matson to get rid of him. "When one player gets into a frame of mind that ruins a hockey club, then that player should be sold down the river. Colonel Matson owes it to himself and to New York fandom to strike at the heart of this matter. It will be a disgrace to hockey if Simmons ever appears in a Viking uniform again."

But some of the other writers take a different point of view. They all agree that Simmons has put himself in wrong for good with the New York fans, but some of 'em think Old Tom should go too. "The situation is evidently so far out of hand," the *Graphic* man writes, "that there should be a complete new deal." And it's the general consensus that with this situation at hand the Vikings can't beat the Marauders without a miracle takin' place.

Which shows he ain't so bright, on account of anyone who's connected with sports knows that there's miracles happenin' all the time. Didn't Columbia beat Stanford in the Rose Bowl? Didn't Carl Hubbell strike out Ruth, Gehrig, Foxx, Simmons, and Cronin in a row in the All-Star ball game last summer? Didn't the Cards nose out the

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Giants when the Giants were literally *in*? Didn't Yale beat Princeton when the odds was about 8 to 1 against 'em? Say, there ain't nothin' *but* miracles goin' on in sports all the time.

WELL, on a report from the officials at the game, President Calder of the National Hockey League suspends Simmons indefinitely. And then about three hours later, after a long distance telephone talk with Old Tom, he changes around and lifts the suspension. I guess, since there ain't nothin' in the rules that says anythin' about startin' a fight with a guy on your own team, Old Tom persuaded him it was a private fight and one that had to be settled in private.

The whole town, or anyhow everyone I see, is talkin' about hockey and the comin' game with the Marauders. All up and down Eighth Avenue you can hear guys arguin' on the street corners. Some of 'em says Simmons ought to be suspended. Some of 'em say Old Tom ought to resign. Some of 'em say what the hell—players have had rows with their managers before without bustin' up a club.

But there's one thing nobody can deny, not even these grandstand managers who know more than anybody else, to hear them talk. With Simmons 'way short of his best and Joe Nelson out with a busted wrist, the Vikings' famous front line is shot to hell.

"They'd ought to use the Midget in place of this Stover," one guy says.

"De Midget is boint out," says my elevator boy. "Dat's why de Vikings is losin'. De Midget is boint out."

"You'd ought to apply for the job of managin' 'em," I says.

I hear guys layin' bets in the lobby and they have to give big odds to get any dough on the Vikings at all. Up in Pat's Fish House, where I go on account of a swell New England fish chowder they make—the kind with milk—I hear plenty more hockey talk. The boy behind the counter there knows I'm trainin' the Vikings and he tries to pump me. Will the boys pull themself together for this game? Is it true Old Tom won't play Simmons at all? Is it true Biff Wade and some of the others want to see Old Tom out so bad they won't do their stuff? Is it true Jo-Jo Smith won't be able to play on account of the smack in the head he got? Is it true the Midget's legs has gone back on him? Lord, I figure I better go eat somewhere with a false face on account of I don't get no peace.

I start hearin' a lot about Hooks Dooley, too.

"You've seen a couple of damn good teams," the Midget tells me, "in Toronto and Chicago. You seen a couple of swell front lines. But when you see Hooks Dooley of the Marauders you'll see one guy who's a whole hockey club."

"The bigger they come the harder they fall," I says.

"Not Hooks Dooley," says the Midget. "He's big, he's fast, he can make a puck do anythin' except talk I-talian. He likes to win, and he's tough and mean. We never come out of a game with the Marauders without three or four of us bein' bunged up by Hooks. And he seems to be made out of rubber. I never see him laid up."

"Well, I ain't got time to worry about this now bogey man," I tells the Midget. "All I'm worryin' about is how you're goin' to win this game for Old Tom. It'll break his heart if he has to leave this club, and the Colonel's got his resignation if he loses."

The Midget rubs his chin. "Joey, I'm an optimist," he says. "I ain't

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never went into a hockey game before I didn't think we had a chance to win. But I'll tell you the honest truth—we ain't got a Chinaman's chance, Joey. There's more to hockey than just tryin' hard. Team play and spirit. We ain't got either of those right now."

WELL, the day dawned bright and clear, as the fella says. I got that same sick feelin' in the pit of my stomach I have before a big football game. But there's a lot of difference to this. I'm usually thinkin' mostly about the players, but to-day I'm thinkin' about Old Tom. I go up to the Garden around noon and make sure I got everythin' I'll need that night.

I stop in at Old Tom's office and he's there. He's just sittin' at his desk, lookin' at the pictures of some of his championship teams on the wall. I ain't got the heart to talk about the game with him. I can see he's plenty sunk.

Along about five that afternoon I stop in the dining room of the hotel and see most of the boys puttin' away their steak and baked potato. That's the time they eat on the night of a game. I eat somethin' myself, but there ain't any conversation.

Well, about six o'clock I'm up in my room just ready to start for the Garden on account of I can't stand hangin' around here any longer when someone calls me on my room telephone. I answer it, and it's the bartender from the grill room downstairs.

"If you want to win any hockey game tonight you better get down here pronto," he says.

"What's up?" I ask him.

"Your goalie," he says, "is down here stewed to the eyes."

"What! Tubby Clark?" I shouts.

"In person," he says.

Boy, do I make tracks. I don't even stop to put on my coat. When I see Tubby leanin' up against the bar my heart sinks right down into my boots. A drunk goalie is about as good as a pitcher with his throwin' arm in a sling. Any hockey fan will tell you that goal tendin' is the most highly specialized position in the game. You can shuffle your forwards and defense men around but only a goalie can play goal. I grab hold of Tubby. He looks stupid.

"It'sh all sho terribul, terribul, terribul," he says, thick.

"For the Lord's sake snap out of it," I tell him. "Do you realize you've got to play a hockey game in two hours and a half?"

"Hooksh Dooley—gonna shoot million goals to-nigh'," he says. "Defensh like a shieve . . . forwardsh fightin' 'mong themshelves. It'sh terribul, terribul, terribul . . ."

"By God," I says to the bartender, "I'm goin' to take you apart and see what makes you tick when I have time. Lettin' this guy get so stewed—"

"Lay off, Joey," he says. "He ain't had a drink here. He come in this way. Incidentally, I thought I see that Mrs. Simmons come in the front entrance with him, but I can't be sure."

Mitzi Simmons! So she was going to make sure of Old Tom losin' out by gettin' the goalie drunk. That lousy little two-timin'— But I can't stop to cry over spilled milk.

"Do me a favor," I says to the bartender. "Get Midget McGrath and John Hatter on the phone and tell 'em to come straight down to Clark's room. And have somebody send up about a barrel of cracked ice and a gallon of the strongest, blackest, hottest coffee they can make here. And hurry!"

I HAVE a hell of a time gettin' Tubby across the lobby to the elevator. He keeps mumblin': "All sho terribul . . . I c'n play goal wish

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any of 'em," he says. "But thish club, alwaysh fightin' 'mong themshelves, make me look like rank ama-ama-amasheur."

"You're goin' to look like a piece of hamburger steak in about five minutes if you don't start gettin' hold of yourself," I tell him.

"Mitshi undershtands," muttered Tubby.

Damn that double-crossin' little twist! Well, I get Tubby to his room and onto his bed and start pullin' off his clothes. Then the Midget and the Hatter show. The Midget takes one look at Tubby and then he calls Old Tom on the phone and gives him the bad news.

When he hangs up he looks desperate. "We've got to get him fixed up," he says. "The regular league spare goalie is up in Toronto to-night. Jimmy Craig, a kid we got a string on in the minors, is playin' a game in Ottawa with the farm club. He couldn't get here even if he flew. There's nothin' for it but to fix Tubby up."

Well, we rip off his clothes and throw him bodily in a tub of cold water. We keep slappin' him and punchin' him and he flops around like a bag of meal without no life in it. When the ice and coffee come we go to work with that. Lord, I guess we must have kept workin' on him for about an hour before he even starts to make sense. As soon as we can we get him in some clothes and drag him up on the roof of the hotel and walk him around until we're half froze to death on account of we ain't got any coats with us.

Then Tubby begins to cry and the Midget is so mad he pokes him one in the jaw that damn near knocked him out. It's eight o'clock before we finally drag him into the Garden. There's only a half an hour to get dressed. Tubby is makin' sense all right now, but his legs is weak under him, and his hands shake like he has the palsy.

The Midget and the Hatter go into a huddle with Old Tom.

"He won't be worth a damn out there for quite a while," the Midget says. "Maybe not at all. The only thing we can do is play a defensive game and not let anyone get a shot at him, or we're sunk."

Old Tom laughs, and it ain't a pleasant sound.

"I thought at least we'd have a fighting chance," he says.

Most of the gang is gathered around Tubby, tryin' to get his nerve up. I'm helpin' him on with his skates and his pads on account of his hands shake so he can't even tie his shoes. Well, it's almost game time when Biff Wade goes up to the Old Man. He looks kind of embarrassed.

"Say, boss," he says, with a kind of sheepish grin, "maybe I haven't been playin' just the kind of hockey I should the last few weeks. But you can count on me to give everything I got tonight. This is a rotten tough break for you and for us."

Some of the light seems to come back into Old Tom's eyes. "Thanks, Biff," he says, quiet.

"Me too, Tom," says another voice. It's Stoney Jackson.

There's tears runnin' down Tubby Clark's cheeks. "I could kill myself for this, Tom. Honest to God. But I'll make the grade . . . I swear I will."

I start laughin' to myself. So it ain't the age of miracles. One dope gets himself stewed and everybody starts gettin' pepped up. Not that it will do any good. You only have to see Tubby wobblin' around on his pins to know that all the remorse in the world ain't goin' to do him any good.

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Then the bell rings. It's time to go out on the ice.

CHAPTER XII.

MAN OUT!

WELL, I can't watch our boys after the first minute. Tubby's in the net and our whole squad is lined up in front of him takin' shots. God help us, Tubby can't even *see* the puck, even though the boys are just slippin' it at him easy. The Garden is packed and everybody is givin' the Vikings the business, booin' and yellin' at 'em. Tubby falls down tryin' to stop an easy one and the Hatter shoots at him and the place goes crazy. The crowd don't know he's stewed, of course. They think it's nerves.

Then I get my first look at Hooks Dooley. The Marauders are takin' practice shots at their own goalie, Sleepy Joe Evarts. Dooley has a big number three on the back of his jersey and I see him skate in and drive one at Evarts that would have gone clean through him if he'd been in the way. Then Dooley skates over toward the bench. Boy, he's everythin' the Midget says. He's over six feet tall and looks bigger on his skates; he must weigh close to 220; he's fast as lightning and he looks awful tough. He's got a big grin on his face as he skates up to where Old Tom is sittin'.

"Hello, Tom," he says.

He still grins, nasty.

"Hello, Hooks," says the Old Man.

"It's a damn shame the way these guys have been givin' you the business, Tom," says Dooley. "Every time I smack one of 'em down to-night you can figure part of it's for you. Too bad it's going to be such a slaughter." And he skates off laughin'. Old Tom don't say nothin', but just sits there with his lips drawn tight.

"Ladieeees and gentlemuuuuun," says the loudspeaker. "The officials for to-night's game are Joe Brilleart and Stewart Collins. As you know, the outcome of tonight's game will determine the last playoff berth in the American Division." And then it's time to go.

Cold sweat starts to break out on me. Old Tom starts with Simmons, Stover, and the Hatter up front, and Biff and Stoney Jackson back. The crowd is booin' Simmons so loud you can't hear yourself think. Twice they have to delay the start of the game when some mugs in the balcony throw wadded newspapers and a couple of oranges at Red. Hooks Dooley is at center for the Marauders, with Manero and Carstairs at the wings, and Ed Sebastian and Tom O'Rourk in front of Sleepy Joe Evarts. I take a look at Tubby Clark and want to close my eyes. He's tense, white-faced and awful unsteady on his pins. Then the whistle blows and the big game of the season is on—with a stewed goalie in one net.

Dooley flicks the puck back on the face-off to Manero. Manero is one of the few Italians in the game, but he's a sweet, smooth-workin' forward. But Simmons checks him hard into the boards and Biff Wade picks up the puck and goes bargin' down center ice. Before he gets in range Dooley poke-checks the rubber away from him and starts tearin' down center ice himself. Stover gives him a mean body check, but Hooks bounces off it like a rubber ball with the puck still on his stick. He wades right through Stoney Jackson and he's just about to let fly when the Hatter slides across in front of him on his stomach, like Frankie Frisch goin' into second base. Dooley's stick catches

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him a mean one in the ribs, but the puck is smothered and don't even get in to Tubby Clark, who's shakin' like a tree in a storm.

THE crowd is yellin' bloody murder on account of the Vikings ain't played such spirited hockey for weeks as they show in this first forty-five seconds. Stover, Simmons and Wade put on a quick rush with only Sebastian and O'Rourk back there. It's a real honest-to-God three man play which ends up with Simmons blazin' a hard one at the net. Sleepy Joe Evarts clears, makin' it look so easy it's exasperatin'. Half the time he don't even seem to be watchin' the play. Dooley is back down the ice again and plenty sore at the bumpin' he took on his last rush, although he's still grinnin' as he picks up the rubber and starts down the left boards. Boy, two hundred and twenty pounds of dynamite goin' hell bent for leather is somethin' to stop. He don't have to use much deception. I couldn't help thinkin' how I'd like to have this baby playin' fullback on my football team! Young Stover tries to check him again and gets the butt end of Hooks' stick in the stomach for his pains.

The referee misses this one, but the crowd don't, and they're shouting their heads off.

Hooks cuts in, tears smack between Biff and Stoney Jackson and is just about to let fly again when once more the Hatter, that old fox in a baseball cap, reaches out his stick and trips Hook right smack on his nose. Simmons slams the puck out of danger and once more they stopped the puck from gettin' to Tubby. But the referee didn't miss that one. He thumbs the Hatter off the ice, and for the first time I'm goin' to see the new penalty shot.

They just started this play this year. There's a circle about ten feet wide and about thirty-eight feet out from the cage in the center of the ice. The referee puts the puck in the middle of the circle. All the players except Hooks Dooley and Tubby Clark, in the nets, move over to the side of the rink. The idea is that Hooks can skate from anywhere to make this shot, only he can't shoot the puck from outside that ten-foot circle.

From 'way over on the bench I can see Tubby Clark shakin'. Hooks starts from clear down the other end of the ice and comes tearin' down on the puck like a runaway locomotive. I could see the rubber fly straight for Tubby. I pray. He'd ought to stop it because it's right at him. Then all I see is Tubby go flat on his face on the ice and the *puck ain't in!* Tubby had stopped it somehow. But he don't get up.

Players start skatin' toward him and he lies there like he's dead. The referee waves to me from the bench and I slide out over the ice, carryin' my first aid kit. They've rolled Tubby over on his back and one look at him is enough to tell me the whole story. That puck had hit him square in the eye. His face is a terrible mess, poor guy. I stop bein' mad at him when I see how bad he's hurt.

"Lucky if he ever sees out of it again," I hear somebody say.

But Tubby don't hear 'em, because he's out cold.

When a goalie is hurt in a league hockey game they allow you ten minutes to patch him up and the players may all leave the ice at the discretion of the referee. Then if the goalie can't go on they allow you another five minutes to get a substitute ready. Well, it don't take the Garden doctor to tell me that Tubby is

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through for to-night, and maybe for good.

ALL the Vikings is in the locker room and I know they're all thinkin' what the hell we are goin' to do now. There is a spare league goalie we could use in a spot like this, but, as we know, he's in Toronto. Outside of that we got to use someone under contract unless the Marauders will agree to somethin' else. And even if they do, who can we get?

Old Tom is with the doctor and Tubby in the first aid room, so we don't know what he's thinkin'. But in a minute he comes out lookin' like a death's head.

"Tubby can't go on, boys," he said.

Nobody says a word. They're all lookin' at Old Tom and I realize that now they're in a jam they're countin' on him to figure a way out. Just at that minute Hooks Dooley and Eddie Calloway, the manager of the Marauders, come in. They want to know how Tubby is.

"I'm sorry as hell about it," says Hooks Dooley. "But any club that'd send out a goalie that's liquored up deserves what's comin' to 'em."

Somebody had spilled the beans, which is too bad, but don't make no difference in the present situation. Old Tom is lookin' at Calloway, tight-lipped.

"Eddie, you've got a spare goalie with your club—young Ames. Will you let us use him for the balance of the game?"

Calloway laughs. "You're goin' nuts, Tom. Why should we let you use one of our men and maybe lose the extra dough comin' to us in the playoffs?"

"It would be a sporting gesture," says Old Tom in a dry voice.

"To hell with sporting gestures," says Calloway. "I got fifteen or sixteen guys lookin' for extra gravy. Why should I help 'em lose it? And, anyhow, it wouldn't be fair to young Ames. If we win, then there'd always be the alibi that maybe he didn't play his best for you. Nothin' doin', Tom. I'm sorry, but nothin' doin'. You should have seen to it that the league's spare goalie was on deck for such an important game."

"Why don't you use Simmons in the nets?" says Hooks Dooley, nasty. "He wants to be the whole show. We can give him plenty of action."

Old Tom pulls out his watch, grim-faced. "We have ten minutes to settle this problem, gentlemen. Suppose you leave us to do it by ourselves."

"Okay," Hooks says. "I still hope you play Simmons back there." And he and Calloway scram.

THERE'S dead silence in our locker room for a minute. Then the Hatter speaks up. "I'll take a chance at it, Tom. I guess I'd do as well as anyone else. None of us has ever played goal as far as I know."

Old Tom shakes his head. "If we hope to score any goals, Hatter, you've got to be up front. All the defensive hockey in the world won't win a game for us."

"That damned louse, Calloway!" the Midget storms. "Any other club in the league would of lent us a spare goalie if they'd had one."

"I suppose you can't blame 'em for wantin' to win at any cost," says Ed Carey. "What a hell of a break for us."

"Well, somebody's got to take the rap," says the Midget. "I'll play goal if you say the word, Tom."

Old Tom shakes his head. "We need you up front too, Midget." He draws

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a deep breath. "There's one man under contract to this club who has played goal before," he says.

"Who's that?" three or four of 'em pipe up at once.

"Tom Cutler," says Tom Cutler. And very slowly he starts takin' off his coat and vest. "Get me Tubby's stuff, Joey," he says.

My God, I couldn't move. Nobody else could speak for a minute, and then they all begin shoutin' at once.

"You can't do it, Tom!"

"Not legal—"

"There's a player's clause in my contract," says Old Tom.

"But, Tom! You'll get hurt! It's crazy!" the Hatter says.

Old Tom's eyes are very bright. "I guess it'll come back to me all right," he says. "Like swimming—there are certain instinctive things about it. We've always stood together, boys. We can go down for the last time together, anyhow."

The Midget is standin' there like a statue with the tears runnin' down his cheeks. "Why, you old son of a gun," he keeps sayin', over and over. Only he don't say "son of a gun."

Biff Wade jumps up on a bench and starts shoutin' hysterical. "We can take those bums," he yells. "We can take 'em, do you hear me? We'll give that Hooks Dooley the runnin' around of his life!"

"They'll see that soon enough," says the Hatter in a hoarse voice, "when Tom goes out there."

And just then Raph Jones comes in. He takes one look at Old Tom strappin' on the pads. "Holy Toledo!" he shouts, and sprints for the press seats.

And then I'm a son of a gun if Red Simmons don't go up to Old Tom. His Adam's apple is workin' up and down his throat. "Tom," he says, in a funny voice, "I'd like to think this was a grandstand play, but God help me I know it isn't." And all of a sudden he throws an arm around Tom's shoulder and he's bawlin' like a kid.

Tom is laughin' and pattin' him on the back. "Forget it, Red," he says. "Everybody goes haywire at times."

And then we hear the referee's whistle callin' the boys back to the ice. Old Tom isn't quite ready, and the Midget stays behind to help him and get some last minute dope from the Old Man. I hurry out to the bench just in time to hear the loud-speaker.

"Quiet, please. Quiet, please. Owing to the inability of Tubby Clark to continue in the game, the Vikings will be forced to use a substitute goalie. Old Tom Cutler!"

Honest, I ain't got any words to describe what happened then. That place goes absolutely stark, raving, crazy. And when Old Tom skates out, his white hair lookin' pure silver under the lights, seventeen thousand pair of lungs must have damn near busted. The boys take a few practice shots at Tom and he stops 'em like an old hand. The referee has to blow his whistle half a dozen times before anyone hears it.

Then the boys line up, the lights is thrown down on the rink, and all of a sudden the place is dead for a second. It was like it had been planned, for in that moment of dead silence Old Tom's voice booms up the ice:

"All right, boys. *Let's take 'em!*"

CHAPTER XIII.

LAST STAND.

IF you're countin' on me to give you any kind of a runnin' story of what happened after that you're nuts. I want to tell you I was just plain deliri-

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ous, just like everybody else in the Garden. The whole seventeen thousand of 'em has took up that battle cry of Old Tom's. *"Let's take 'em!"*

And the Vikings? Well, maybe like the Hatter said, they're slippin'. Maybe they're losin' a fraction of a second in their reactions. Maybe they ain't quite as good as they used to be. But I want to tell you here and now that nobody—*nobody* ever saw such a knock down, drag out, slam bang, hell bent for leather hockey game . . . and probably nobody ever will again. I'll try to tell you as best I can, but I want to say with that mob howling, stamping and yelling and pounding each other in a state of crazy excitement, and with two hockey clubs goin' at top speed for two periods and a half, never givin' an inch to each other, never lettin' up for a second on the furious pace they set from the moment that whistle blows nobody could tell you everything.

You may forget, but when we resume play with Old Tom out there we're one man shy, the Hatter bein' in the penalty box for trippin' Hooks Dooley just before the play that finished Tubby Clark. There's a face-off down near our goal line. Stover and Hooks Dooley are waitin' tense for the referee to drop the puck—and then we're off. Dooley beats Stover on that one and flips the puck back to Carstairs. Wham! Biff Wade crashes him into the boards in a fierce body check, and Red Simmons goes tearin' like a wild man down the ice with the disk. Over center ice Sebastian and O'Rourk meet him head on and knock him for a loop, and big Hooks Dooley, who's back-pedaled clear down the ice, picks it up and starts on a cyclone rush for Old Tom, teamin' up with Manero.

That crowd is screamin', I tell you! Screamin' like a tribe of Indians on the warpath. Old Tom, cool as a general on a reviewin' stand, watches that red tornado come at him. Carstairs joins in the rush and him and Hooks flip the rubber back and forth; they're almost in on Tom and then, boy, oh, boy, Wade, Jackson, Stover smack into Hooks and Manero like three tons of brick, tryin' to keep 'em away from Tom. But the puck dribbles in toward the goal mouth with Carstairs streakin' for it. It looks like the works—only it ain't, because Old Tom comes out of the net, calm, steady, and slams the puck away. Carstairs hits him on account of he can't stop quick enough and they both go down. Red Simmons, tearin' in, jumps clean over them and fills the net. But there's no shot because Stover's recovered the puck and is off with the mail!

I'm holdin' my breath, watchin' Old Tom. But he gets up, grinnin' like a kid, and takes his place again. I see Carstairs askin' him anxious if he's all right. I guess even the Marauders knew what a great guy the Old Man was.

I've been so busy watchin' Old Tom I ain't followed Stover, but the roar of the crowd brings me back to the play. Stover is stick handlin' his way like a wild man clean through Sebastian and O'Rourk and right in on Sleepy Joe Evarts. Sleepy Joe comes out quick, his only chance bein' to close in on Stover before he can shoot. They go down in a heap! The puck is right there, almost in the mouth of the goal. But O'Rourk knocks it out of danger.

THERE'S always been so much talk about Old Tom in connection with this game that the fans lost sight of the fact that a great hockey player was born that night. I'm talkin' about Stover, the Dartmouth kid. From that point on he seemed to be made.

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Hooks Dooley has come back for the puck, but Stover is up and back checkin', fightin' that big red cyclone like a bull terrier, pokin', jabbin', body checkin', blockin' his passes, doggin' his trail no matter where he goes. At center ice he poke checks a pass right away from Manero and starts down again—and at that minute the Hatter comes steamin' out of the penalty box to team up with him.

A slick pass from Stover—the old foxy Hatter, the guy who says he's slippin', don't react quick enough—flimflams Sebastian. He's around him . . . he's right in on Sleepy Joe Evarts . . . he's slammin' the puck at him! Boy, oh boy, oh boy! The Garden is *shakin'* with the damnedest din you ever hear. My ear drums is splittin'. Some spectator is hammerin' hell out of me from behind! Sleepy Joe blocks the rubber! Wham! Stover socks the rebound at him! Again Evarts clears. Hooks Dooley comes in from behind and knocks Stover for a loop all the way to the back boards. But the Hatter has the rebound. It's in! *It's in!* The red light is up! Hats, coats, newspapers are comin' down on the ice in a storm. The Hatter skates away. Some half crazy fan jumps out on the ice and hugs him! People are laughin', screamin' hysterical. And the referee is thumbin' Hooks Dooley to the penalty box for a major penalty—jumpin' Stover from behind!

It takes five minutes for the attendants to clear off the ice. Meanwhile Old Tom calls out the kid line to take over when play can start. Stover, Simmons, and the Hatter come in to the bench. Sweat is pourin' off 'em. The pace has been somethin' like you never see. But they're laughin' and jokin'.

Maybe you think the game slows up now! If you do you got another think comin'. Eddie Calloway sends out his second line of Sullivan, Kiley, and Felton. The Marauders ain't goin' to try no defensive hockey, even with Hooks in the penalty box. They come stormin' down after the face-off. Kiley slams a rifle bullet drive at Old Tom from an angle. Tom clears! Felton slaps the rebound at him. He clears again and Maury Zarakov is off like lightnin', takin' the puck out of danger. Back and forth these two teams rip and tear . . . and then the bell!

My legs won't hardly carry me to get to the locker room. Rest period! Say, that locker room is a madhouse. Reporters, players, club officials. Everybody is poundin' Old Tom, shakin' his hand, yellin', laughin'. There's somethin' in the air that tells everybody the Vikings is in. It don't seem any time before the bell, and we go out again.

Well, I say everybody knows the Vikings is in, but there's one guy who don't. And that one guy is, without any question, the greatest hockey player in the world. His name is Hooks Dooley. When that second period starts Hooks Dooley starts. I thought he looked good before, but it wasn't nothin'. He starts stormin' our net. Stover is stickin' to him, doggin' him, checkin' him, fightin' him, but Dooley acts like Stover is just a bothersome fly. He bulls his way in, he feints, he cuts, and turns, and speeds. Three times he drives wicked ones at Old Tom without makin' the grade. And then, after eight minutes of play, he smashes through our defense. I guess nobody could of stopped him. Nobody in the world. He's right in on Old Tom—feints him to the right, and drives the puck into the left side of the net so hard I think it'll go clear through the string. Up goes the red light. 1—1.

Three minutes later Hooks and Stover meet head on in the middle of

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the ice. Stover goes down and he's so groggy he has to come off. Hooks looks as though nothin' has happened at all. In goes the Midget, and seventeen thousand hoarse throats take up the battle cry again. *"Let's take 'em, Midget!"*

WELL, then I see somethin' I didn't think was possible. I see somebody who can outsmart Dooley. Stover has tried to stand up to Dooley with his own brand of bruisin' hockey. The Midget tries to stay away from him—with the puck! He turns on a dime, he dodges, he ducks under Dooley's arm, he slips the puck between Dooley's skates, and picks it up on the other side. In the end Dooley is roarin' like a mad bull and jams the Midget so hard into the boards I think every bone in his body must be busted. And Dooley goes off for another penalty and the Midget is laughin'.

And then comes the worst kind of a break for us. The Marauders' second line is on. Kiley brings the puck to mid ice. He can't get past the Midget, who's poke checkin' him, so he golfs a long high one the length of the ice toward our net. It was the easiest kind of a shot to stop. Old Tom has stopped a dozen that was ten times as hard. I don't know whether the lights go out in the Old Man's eyes or what, but that floater drifts right into the string without Tom ever touchin' it. We're behind, 2—1, when the period ends.

The minute we're off the ice everyone is crowdin' around Old Tom.

"You feel all right, Tom?"

He's breathin' hard. "The way you fellows are keepin' in front of me a four-year-old should have stopped that last one," he says, bitter.

"Nuts," says the Midget. "Everybody misses those once in a while."

Old Tom gives him a funny look. "I don't care much what happens now, Midget," he says. "You fellows have played a game of hockey that any manager would be proud of."

I have to laugh to myself. The guys have played all right, but it's Old Tom the crowds are yellin' about. Out there, ready to take the rap with his club. Sure, the boys have kept the Marauders from takin' many shots at him. But it was him, goin' out there to play the toughest position on the ice, that gave 'em what it takes.

I spent most of the time workin' on Stover, and by the time we have to go out again he's okay.

Even tellin' it now I get out of breath. That third period was somethin'. There's a strange croakin' noise comin' from the crowd. Their voice is gone and they're weak and exhausted, but they're still wild eyed with excitement. Nobody will ever forget how, after about twelve minutes, the Midget went racin' down the right boards with the puck . . . how Tom O'Rourk blocked him off so he couldn't cut in for a shot . . . how he skated clean around *behind* the Marauders' net . . . and how, out of nowhere, comes the Hatter, takes a perfect pass out from the Midget . . . and the score is tied.

FROM that point on I ain't got no more guts than a wet handkerchief. Time after time, Hooks Dooley comes rip-snortin' down the ice with the puck. Time after time, somehow, even when it seemed impossible, the boys stopped him. Wade, Stoney Jackson, big Fred Partridge . . . they're cut and bruised and achin', but they're stavin' off that red cyclone so he can't get to Old Tom. Simmons and Stover, the Hatter, the Midget, the kid line are all hurlin' themself at Sebastian and

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O'Rourk and Sleepy Joe, but they're takin' their medicine too, and Hooks Dooley is everywhere.

Well, there's a point when all the heart in the world won't win out. Three minutes to go . . . two minutes . . . I know I figured if we have to go into overtime our boys just won't be able to hold up. Maybe Hooks Dooley feels the same way about the Marauders. Because with them two minutes left they start the toughest jammin' of the whole night. They're shootin' their wad and their chances on these last two minutes. The whole five of 'em come stormin' down, sticks, bodies, shoulders, knees. Lord, I don't know how the boys held 'em. It don't seem like flesh and blood can stand up against Dooley's batterin' ram assault no longer.

Old Tom is in there, so damn gallant, so damn cool, so damn quick and agile. Sixty-five years old and he's playin' a game at goal that would of made Roy Worters, or Hainsworth, or Chabot or any of them top-notchers green with envy. But I know he can't make it now. Nobody can stop that wild-eyed Dooley.

One minute to go! Wham! Stover jams into Dooley on the boards right in front of me, and I hear a kind of sobbin' noise come out of the Dartmouth kid's throat. He's out on his feet. They're all out on their feet. Dooley is the only one that ain't. He's faster, tougher, keener than ever. Forty seconds. Dooley has the puck. He's skatin' slowly around behind his own net. He's shoutin' at the rest of the Marauders. Then I felt my heart turn to ice.

Down come those red-shirted devils in a last rush. All five of 'em! They jam their way over center ice, passin' the puck back and forth like they're inspired. Dooley rifles the puck between Wade and Jackson at Old Tom and then goes bullin' through after it. The Hatter, Simmons, Stover, are in front of Tom, tryin' to fight off this last attack. Tom cleared that first shot . . . Dooley smacks it again . . . again it bounces out. And then there's a mix-up of flying sticks and skates. Old Tom is down on his hands and knees, and still they haven't beat him.

And then—God give me strength to tell you—out of that mass comes a guy in a pale blue jersey—a guy with a mop of flamin' hair. It's Red Simmons . . . ten seconds to play . . . and no one between him and Sleepy Joe Evarts. Down the ice he goes, fast but not too fast. The greatest left wing in hockey, Red Simmons used to be. He's cool now, steady. Hooks Dooley is after him, but he's goin' to have time for one clear shot. Sleepy Joe Evarts is tense, spread out for a save. For just a flash of a second I felt sorry for him. He was all alone . . . no one to make Simmons' job hard for him. Say, then I get another flash. Simmons! Simmons, once the idol of the fans, who's been booed and had things throwed at him. Simmons has the chance to make everyone forget. Boy, oh boy, in that minute I guess every heart stopped. Red don't hurry . . . not even with the crowd screamin' at him that Dooley is thunderin' down. He feints to the right . . . feints to the left. And then he lets fly. It's *in!* At the same minute Dooley crashes into him—and the bell rings! It's over.

Up off the ice jumps Hooks Dooley. He skates for the other end, bumpin' players aside. And in the next second he's got Old Tom in a bear hug. I don't know how I got out there, but I did. Hooks is laughin' . . . laughin' with a kind of a choke in it.

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"You old dog," he says. "That's the greatest, damnedest, finest hockey game I ever hope to play in my life. So you can't make the boys play hockey any more, eh?" And he laughs and somehow Old Tom gets picked up and swept away in the crowd. Hooks Dooley looks after him, shakin' his head. Then he looks at me. "And we wouldn't lend 'em a goalie," he says. "That'll make history, too," he says.

WELL, there's a celebration in the Vikings' locker room. It ain't the first in eight years, but I bet it's the most excitin'. It seems like everyone in New York is tryin' to get in to shake Old Tom's hand. The Hatter, Stover and Simmons, and the rest of 'em is comin' in for the congrats.

And then, all of a sudden, in comes Colonel Matson.

"Tom!" he says, and starts pumpin' the old man's hands up and down. "Tom! Wanted to be the first to congratulate you . . . you know that, eh? But, by Jove, such a crush outside couldn't get in!"

"That's okay, Colonel," says Old Tom. "Glad we could win for you."

"Guess you don't have to worry about your job now, eh, Tom?" says the Colonel. "Ha, ha! Fans would throw me to the wolves if you ever left the Vikings, eh? Greatest game I ever saw . . . most spectacular thing in history of hockey . . ." And then someone pushes the Colonel aside and Red Simmons is standin' in front of Tom.

"Tom!" his voice cracks sharp. "I—I just heard how this happened tonight. That it was Mitzi who—who fixed Tubby. Tom, so help me God, I didn't know anything about it."

"Sure, Red. I know," says Old Tom, grippin' his hand tight.

Simmons' voice breaks. "That dame has had me crazy, Tom . . . makin' me go back on you after eight years."

"Forget it, kid, forget it."

"Tom, you're set here for life," says Simmons, hoarse. "You'd have every right to ship me to Vancouver or clean out of hockey if you wanted to, after what I've done. I—"

Tom gives him a hell of a smack on the back. "Ship my best left wing to Vancouver? You think I've gone nuts, Red? Hell, man, you won the game!"

Simmons laughs then. "*I* won the game!" he says. "Say, Tom, who are you tryin' to kid?"

THE END

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"Uglee peegl I kill you!"

Including the Scandinavian

By R. V. GERY

"SPEAKIN' of Swedes—"

Mr. Chardis, the Levuka's herculean second officer, leaned back in his chair and contemplated with a pitying eye a Norwegian barque loading in the basin beneath us. It was mid-afternoon in Le Havre, and he and I had been lazily sipping drinks at a table on the sidewalk, while across the harbor, her decks a haze from the laboring winches, the Levuka took on her final dollops of freight. This evening she would be ready for sea—but meanwhile the sun smote warmly on the cobbles, the whisky was at his elbow, his pipe spluttered in full blast, and Mr. Chardis gave every indication of being about to deliver himself of one of his more masterly lies.

"Speakin' of Swedes—"

Ole was so dumb he mistook kicks for caresses—but First Mate Bagshaw was to be thankful for Ole's thick head

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"We weren't," I said. "But continue, continue!"

He rolled a baleful eye upon me. "Kindly confine your observations to yourself, mister," he said with dignity. "That is, if you're willin' to listen to a yarn—"

I have had sufficient experience of Mr. Chardis and his embroideries to subside at once.

"Go ahead!" I said contritely, shoving the bottle over. "I'll bite!"

He saw fit to disregard the implication in my last remark. From the fine frenzy in his rolling eye I gathered that a special effort was to be forthcoming, and braced myself accordingly.

HIS name (said Chardis) was Ole Olsen—believe it or not. About half these here fellers from up the Baltic seem to be called that, one way or another, same as every other Welshman's called John Jones. Dunno why—kind o' national weakness, maybe. Anyhow, that was his monicker—Ole Olsen; and he was a deck-hand on the old Matoppo, along there just after the war.

I dunno whether you've observed it, too, but these Scowegians, takin' 'em by and large, seem to run to size more than to intelleck. Not so spry about the upperworks, somehow—all brawn an' no brains, you might say. Leastways, that's what I've always been led to believe. And when this here Ole Olsen come aboard us, I reckon most of us on the Matoppo thought similar.

It was at Suez, and that's a rum kind of a place for a feller like that to be on the loose, too. But there he was, out of a ship, and the agent sent him off to us to replace a cove what had got about six inches of a knife stuck in him at Port Said, t'other end of the Canal.

I was on the bridge—I was third in them days—with our first officer, Bagshaw, when Ole come up the ladder off of the lighter.

Bagshaw was one o' them perishin' little jokers, about two foot high and ten foot 'round, and with a head on him the size of a balloon. What's more, he'd no use for Swedes, or Dagoes, or any o' them outlandish breeds. Swedes in partic'lar was his meat.

"Good godfathers!" he says to me. "Wot in thunder's this walkin' miracle comin' aboard here?"

"Dunno, sir," I says to him, careful-like. It didn't pay to be anything else with Bagshaw. "Looks like another o' them bally Scandahoovians to me."

He squints down under his hand, very pompous.

"By the Lord, Mister Chardis," says he, "I wouldn't wonder but what you're right! Yes, upon me soul—it is! Another o' these tow-haired, slack-witted, ham-fisted, potwallopin' sons o' Satan! Yes, by James! Bos'n!" He bellows down over the rail. "Bring that man up here to me. I want to see him!"

Well, in about a minute here comes Ole, paradin' along of the bos'n, lookin' about the size of a first-prize ox, and as if he was still three-quarters asleep an' the rest cuckoo. Bagshaw looks him up and down.

"Hump!" he says. "What's *your* name, eh?"

Ole gapes at him, stupid. "Olsen, 'is name is, sir," says the bos'n. "Ole Olsen. 'E don't seem very bright, sir."

"Bright!" Bagshaw's workin' himself up into a passion. "Not very bright, you say? Well, he'll be bright enough by the time I've done with him.

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I'll give him bright! D'ye hear that, you?"

Ole's been starin' in front of him like he's in a dream, but now he wakes up, kind of.

"Yaw!" he says.

Somehow or other, that seems to touch Bagshaw off.

He takes a deep breath, an' turns purple.

"Oh, you do, do you?" he gulps. "Well, just you make a note of it, that's all. There's going to be a Swedish gent of the name of Ole that's liable to learn a thing or two on this vessel. Oh, yes, by Judas!"

I dunno what Ole thought he was talkin' about—makin' him a speech of welcome, maybe—but he tugs at his forelock and grins all over his ugly p'iss.

"Yaw!" says he, affable. "Fine day, yaw?"

That finishes Bagshaw — he was a proper stickler for ship's discipline anyway, and he was in a thunderin' tear to begin with. For just a second I thought he was goin' to lay in to Ole with his two little fists.

"Take him away!" he howls at the bos'n. "Take him out o' my sight before I do him a mischief! Take him below an' look after him—and the next time he addresses me, you tell him to say 'Sir!' or I'll kick him from here to—to Madagascar, by the Lord! I'll give him 'Yaw!'"

He goes stampin' up an' down the bridge, ravin' like a tomcat in the measles, an' the bos'n takes Ole away. He's still grinnin' to himself, Cheshire-cat fashion, and waggin' his big silly head. One'd think he'd been played aboard by a brass band, with all hands an' the ship's cook. Bagshaw goes on with his song-and-dance for quite a while; he was a nasty little biter, as I believe I've hinted already. Then he runs down, an' goes stumpin' off to his cabin. I thought to meself: Yes, and here's trouble bankin' up for somebody!

Trouble? You wouldn't believe!

WELL, that night we pulls out, and here we goes, away down the stinkin' Red Sea to Aden, which is a cut worse than Suez, as you may be aware. The Matoppo wasn't one o' these new-fangled freighters with ice-water in every cabin an' a cuddy like the Berengaria's saloon—she was just an ordinary old cow of a trampo, slow, rickety and uncomfortable. By the time we'd stewed a couple o' days in the Red Sea, an' fried a couple more hangin' about Aden lookin' for more cargo, all hands was pretty much in a state o' mind, what with one thing and another. So that when we're at sea again, pointin' for Goa an' the Malabar Coast—an' that ain't no ruddy picnic, neither—we're just about due for a blow-up somewhere or other.

An' Bagshaw just the cove to oblige. He's a fat little josser, and the heat's playin' the devil with his liver anyway; so up he gets, an' starts prowlin' the ship, seekin' what he may devour, as you might say. And it's not long before he's found what he wants, neither.

He comes across friend Ole lyin' in the shade o' the forward donkey-engine, takin' a quiet caulk. The heat don't seem to worry that big sawney none—not the heat, nor anything else, seemin'ly. He's been goin' about things since he come aboard with the silly grin still on his mug, an' lookin' as if he'd found a berth at last that was a paradise here below, if you get me; an' that don't do him no good with

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Bagshaw neither, 'cos 'e don't like to see nobody happy, not even if they're so batty up top they don't know any better.

An' seein' Ole snoring away there just puts the lid on it.

"Why, damnation an' blue fire!" he says to the bos'n. "What in Gehenna's this? What kind of a hell's delight of a ship d'ye think this is, eh, with men lyin' about all over the decks—"

"'E's off watch, sir," says the bos'n, tryin' to make the best of it.

"Off watch!" Bagshaw jumps down his throat. "What's that got to do with it, damme? I s'pose you'll be tellin' me he's to snooze in the chart-room if he wants to. Here, you! Come on—rise an' shine!"

An' with that he fetches Ole a kick in the ribs that'd have paralyzed a hippopotamus.

"Get up!" he says. "Get up an' let's have a look at you! Enjoyin' yourself down there, eh?"

Ole's scrambled to his feet, an' stands there lookin' more like an 'alf-witted sheep than ever.

"Yaw!" he says, pullin' away at his old forelock again. "Pretty fine sleep, mister! Plenty hot, eh?"

And he wipes the sweat off his forehead with his elbow, pleasant and matey as you please.

Bagshaw just goggles at him for a minute. Then he explodes with a loud roar.

"Great jumping Jehoshaphat!" he yells. "Suffering Moses an' the bulrushes! Twenty-three years at sea—twenty-three years and damme if ever I heard the like o' that! Why, you limpin' conglomeration of tallow an' Stockholm tar, d'ye know who you're talkin' to? D'ye know that? Answer me!"

And Ole shows his big yellow teeth, an' says "Yaw, mister!" again.

WELL, I'll trouble you to imagine what that did to the mate. He glares at Ole, chokin', so that the bos'n wondered what was comin' first—apoplexy or murder. Then he stammers out a mouthful o' stuff, most of it fit to blister the paint, an' the rest gibberish; an' then he turns on his heel an' goes aft at the rate of knots. There's the slam of his cabin door, and the bos'n sets about Ole.

"Get below!" says he, mighty savage. "You done about enough for one time, seems to me."

Ole's starin' after Bagshaw with his mouth open, but now he shuts it an' nods his big lump of a head.

"Nice faller!" he says, pleased as all hell. "He lak me, Ay tank!"

"Wot?" screams the bos'n. "Wot was that?"

"He lak me," says Ole again. "You hear what he say to me, no? Pretty nice faller, yaw!"

Well, the bos'n began to wonder who was balmy, him or the Swede. He scratches his head, puzzled.

"See here," he says, "you better get below and finish your shut-eye down there, Olsen. Looks like this 'ere sun's been a bit too much for you, my lad!"

So off Ole trots, like a great big dog someone's just give a pat to, an' the bos'n gets to thinkin'. This here business looks a lot too like the horrors to be comfortable, specially as Ole's a Swede, an' they're a queer bunch anyway—an' moreover, Ole's big enough to tackle any three other hands together an' lick 'em. He don't relish the idea o' that whopper goin' through the fo'c's'le, crazy; and so 'e comes up to me on the bridge:

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"Beg pardon, sir!" says he. "I'd be wishful to 'ave a word with you."

Now I'd been watching what'd been happening forward, and I'd seen Bagshaw come aft, with a face on him like a—like a dose o' medicine. We'd all of us juniors been gettin' it from his tongue lately pretty cruel, and it seemed to me that now was the time to have some of it back.

"Well?" I says. "What is it, Hughes?"

He looks a bit doubtful. "It's this here Olsen, sir—" he says; and then he tells me the whole tale, without any trimmin's. Comin' from him the way it did, and knowin' Swedes in general, it did look a bit off; but I let on to be not much impressed with the yarn, in a way o' speakin'.

"Well?" I says. "An' what d'ye want *me* to do about it, Hughes? Tell the skipper?"

Cotton was our master, an' what with one thing and another I didn't exackly see myself doin' any. mine-layin' under his bows. Too ruddy dangerous, if you get me. Hughes fidgets.

"I'd be glad if you'd remember, sir," says he, "that I reported it—"

"Get out!" says I. "I won't forget!"

WELL, nor I did—only somehow it slipped me memory to pass the info on to anyone. Not that it needed passin' on; in twenty-four hours there wasn't a soul on the Matoppo that didn't know Ole was cracked.

An' the way he showed it was a caution. So help me, if it hadn't been clear from the look of him that he was a bit loony, one'd have thought he was havin' a little game with Bagshaw. I've said already he was like a big, stoopid dog, all grin an' good nature; but now he was just that an' nothin' else. You'd see him followin' the mate round the decks, whenever he got a chanst, fair askin' to be took notice of. An' when he couldn't follow him on foot, so to speak, he'd sit an' stare at him—by crimes, I've watched him an' waited to see him get up on his hunkers an' beg.

O' course, it was all over the ship at once. There's no keepin' a thing like that secret, especially as Bagshaw wasn't what you might call popular with any one. It come up in the saloon, the second night.

"Mr. Bagshaw," says the skipper, gentle-like, "what's all this I hear of your havin' made a conquest among the hands, forrard there?"

Now this was a nasty one in all sorts of ways, for Bagshaw'd quite a record among the ladies ashore, an' well the skipper knew it. The mate and his various conquests at one port and another were common talk behind hands in the mess. So there was a bit more in Cotton's remark than met the eye, in a manner o' speakin', an' Bagshaw flushed up.

"I don't know what you're referrin' to, sir," he says, pretty stiff.

The skipper lets on to be surprised. "Indeed?" he comes back. "I'd heard —you'll forgive me if I'm wrong, Mr. Bagshaw — that our last arrival was doin' quite a bit of hero-worshippin'," he says, "at your shrine. It's a grand thing, Mr. Bagshaw," says he, squintin' down his nose, "to see such happy relations existin' between the bridge an' the fo'c's'le. I make you me compliments, I'm sure."

Well, by that time the rest of us was about half-chokin' with laughter, an' Bagshaw was the color of a beet-root. There wasn't anything much he could say, neither—if he denied it, the

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skipper'd pull his leg off for bein' modest, an' if he admitted it, bang would go his bloomin' reputation as a tyrant aboard. So he tried to carry it off, airy-like.

"If you're thinkin' of that so-and-so Swede, sir," he says, "he's crazy, anyhow, and oughtn't to have been signed on in the first place. Anyhow," he goes on, "by the time I've finished with him I think he'll have had a bellyful of hero-worship, if that's what's the matter with him."

An' with that he shoves his plate away, excuses himself, and goes on deck, breathin' through his nose an' once again lookin' for a sacrifice. The skipper don't say nothin'—only there's a twinkle in his wicked old eye, and he's more than usual pleasant all around for the rest o' supper. An' by an' by, when there comes floatin' in at the skylight some choice expressions o' Mr. Bagshaw's, addressed to you can guess who, I thought he'd bust out laughin'.

"Ah?" says he, lookin' round the table. "Wot a wonderful thing sympathy is, to be sure, gentlemen! Wot *would* we do without it?"

ALL the same, Bagshaw looked as if he could do without it, in the next days. The more he cussed Ole, the better that big chucklehead seemed to like it. An' there's no law at sea to prevent a deck hand from lookin' worshipful at an officer. Bagshaw tried to get him for dumb insolence once or twice, but where was the good o' that? He'd have to haul him up to the skipper for that, and a plucky lot o' change he'd have got out of it.

So there was Ole, proclaimin' to all an' sundry that the first officer loved him like a son—an' the first officer bootin' him around the deck free an' frequent, an' the whole ship's company o' the Matoppo takin' it in an' laughin' fit to split. An' things was like that still when we made Goa, an' dropped anchor in the road.

Now I dunno whether you're familiar with Goa, which is a Portugoose kind of a colony or what-not, plunked down in the middle of India. It's a queer place, an' there's plenty that'd say it was one o' the last Gawd made; but if you knew it—an' the Matoppo did, seein' it was one of our regular ports o' call—there was a whole lot doin' there. Especially in the society line, if you get what I mean.

And Bagshaw fancied himself in Goa. Quite a bit he fancied himself—he'd got the *ontray*, you might say, to one or two o' these *chee-chee*, half-caste, Eurasian families there, an' when he went ashore he done himself proud. Everyone knew it, an' when he comes up, the evening we anchored, all rigged out in his best Gawd-blime shore-goin' outfit, there was more quiet sniggers, an' everyone looked the other way.

Excep' the skipper—and Ole. The skipper's on the bridge, and Bagshaw approaches him, formal, with the request for shore leave.

"Why, yes, Mr. Bagshaw," says Cotton. "By all means—by all means. Go ashore and—hum, enjoy yourself. Er—wait a minute, though," he says, cockin' his eye forrard. "You ain't bein' accompanied by that Scandinavian satellite o' yours, are you? I mean to say, d'ye think he's quite up to your speed, hereabouts?"

Bagshaw looks over his shoulder, an' rips out a fathom and a half o' select blasphemious language. There'd been general leave given the port watch—Ole's watch—an' the hands was musterin' at the gangway, with a kind of a

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native bumboat waitin' to take 'em off. Ole's with 'em, slicked up with soap an' bear's grease the way these Swedes do, an' he's a handsome animal at that, with his six-foot-four an' shoulders, an' the come-an'-get-it blue eyes. I reckon you wouldn't see a finer specimen between there an' Hongkong, that minute.

But he's still lookin' at the mate, with the trustin', "Lor'-love you, ain't we pals?" expression on his dial, and as Bagshaw scowls at him he grins wide an' lovin'.

"There you are!" says the skipper in a shaky kind of voice. "That's what comes o' popularity, Mr. Bagshaw. You better watch out, seems to me, or you'll be havin' him after you all night."

"Damn his eyes!" says Bagshaw.

The skipper turns away. "Well, run along!" he says. "And enjoy yourself. But I'd keep an eye on that joker, all the same. It just occurs to me he might be capable of bein' a nuisance!"

"Can't you stop his leave, sir?" says Bagshaw, alarmed.

The skipper stares at him. "Wot's that?" he asks, kind o' sharp. "Did I hear you suggest that I should victimize a member o' the crew, just to convenience you, Mr. Bagshaw? Far be it from me," he says, "to interfere with the legitimate pleasures of anyone. Anyone, Mr. Bagshaw. I can't stop his leave—and I doubt I would if I could. Look after yourself, Mr. Bagshaw, if you please!"

WELL, that was that, as the sayin' is, and there wasn't anything to be done about it. Bagshaw goes off, mighty put about, and in a while here we see him, in the stern sheets of another native affair, lookin' like a bloomin' admiral. The crew's bumboat's pullin' level with him, and Ole's still rhapsodizin' over the side of it. Cotton chuckles outright.

"Upon my soul, gentlemen," he says to me and the second, "I believe I'll be goin' ashore meself very shortly. If you two officers wish to — hum, accompany me, arrange with one of the engine-room staff to take duty, and we'll see!"

The second and me didn't need any further invitations. We fixed it up with one o' the engineers, like the skipper had said, and in ten minutes or so all three of us, Cotton, the second, and me, was proceedin' shorewards. The skipper don't say much, but just as we hit the beach he turns to us.

"Gentlemen," he says, "fair's fair in everything. I've made this wonderful opportunity for you," says he, "to view the workin's of Providence an' human nature. Now it's up to you—Where's Mr. Bagshaw's usual stampin'-grounds in this port?"

Well, we knew all right—Bagshaw bein' the kind that don't hide his light under a bushel, so to speak—and we told the skipper. He puts his finger to the side of his nose, thoughtful.

"Yes," he says. "That's all right, gentlemen, and thanks a lot for the office. But on the whole," says he, "I think it'd be better if we parted company for this maneuver. It mightn't look so good," he says, "to have the whole bridge navigatin' in company on Mr. Bagshaw's trail. You go your way, with my blessin', and I'll go mine. And if you see me," says he, "why, we're strangers!"

With that, off he goes up the beach, rumblin' in his chest an' shakin' all over with laughter. The second—Higgins was his name—watches him go.

"D'ye know, Chardis," he says to

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me, "there's times when I could almost worship a feller. Yes, indeed!" he says.

"Here, here!" I says to him. "You ain't startin' that game, surely. One's enough, at a time, ain't it? We better do as the skipper says, an' proceed to studying human nature. Come on!"

NOW Goa's like most o' these seaports in the tropics—a strip o' wharves an' warehouses an' pubs along the sea-front, an' behind it the residential district, as you might call it. Bagshaw's main stand-by in the place—as we've heard plenty o' times—is a family o' the name of Da Silva, the old boy bein' somethin' around the harbor, an' the girl a bit o' the proper goods, accordin' to Bagshaw. They'd a house back among the trees, down a shady road, and Higgins an' me makes for it, wonderin' whether we're on the right track or not, an' whether little Kiss-me-Quick's followin' out his usual routine.

We needn't have worried, after all, for we'd not gone a quarter of a mile before Higgins touches my arm.

"Look at that!" he says, stoppin'.

There's a few electrics still, even back here away from the town. And under one of 'em, dead ahead of us, is our Mr. Bagshaw, and he ain't alone, neither. Ole's there—you could see his shoulders a mile away—an' Bagshaw's deliverin' an impassioned oration in his direction. It don't take a fool to see what he wants, an' that's to be shot of the big Swede, an' quick too. Even from where we was, we could hear the pretty-pretties fair drippin' off his tongue.

"Crimes!" says I. "He's doin' himself proud!"

Well, there wasn't much doubt o' that, but it didn't seem to affect Ole more than a shower o' rain. He stands there, soakin' it all in an' shiftin' from one big foot to the other—an' finally Bagshaw runs down.

"What next?" says Higgins to me.

That one wasn't difficult to answer, for Bagshaw shakes his little fist under Ole's nose, and off with him again, up the dark road towards the Da Silva house. The big lummox stands there a minute, clear under the electric—an' then he scratches his head, turns, an' goes shamblin' off in Bagshaw's wake.

"Come on!" I says. "There's goin' to be proceedin's here."

So Higgins and me, we tackles down to the trail, and in a while here we are, maybe fifty-sixty yards behind Ole, and as far again from the house. There's lights in it, an' by all seemin' Bagshaw's inside. Ole stops, puzzled.

"That's done for him!" says Higgins. "He'll have to wait now, till His Lordship's good an' ready to come out."

"Looks like it," I says. "Well, we'll wait, too. I wouldn't miss this for a million."

"Nor me," says Higgins, pullin' back into the shadow. "It's better than a play. Wonder where the skipper's got to."

"Don't ask me," I says. "But he's somewhere in the offin', I'll bet half a dollar. Trust him to— Hey! What's all that?"

We'd been talkin', an' never kept an eye on what was goin' on up the road; but seemin'ly Ole had made up what he called his mind an' acted. There's the hell's own bobbery suddenly busts out, a woman screamin', Bagshaw cursin' fit to beat the devil—an' then there's a silence.

"What in thunder's happened now?" says Higgins, listenin'. "He's surely not—"

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He stops, for there's still no sound, an' what's more there's no sight of Ole.

"Perhaps he's killed him!" I says, gettin' in a bit of a stew.

"Killed him!" says Higgins. "Who—Bagshaw? Him kill that big lump? Come off it, Chardis—"

"Well," I says, "killed him or not, I ain't stoppin' here growin' gooseberries. I'm goin' to have a look!"

And with that I marches up the road, bold as brass, with Higgins after me, and in a minute we're close to the house.

'TWASN'T much of a place—just the usual kind of a bungalow, with a veranda, standin' a bit back from the road. Old man Da Silva's not any millionaire, by the look of it, although with these here half-an'-halfs you can't never really tell. They've most of 'em got a bit o' somethin' hid away—and anyhow, it ain't like our Mister Bagshaw to be trailin' along any blind alley. He knows somethin', that little perisher, an' take it by an' large he's pretty cushy here.

That's to say, he would be, if things was normal. But they ain't. Not a bit of it they ain't! From where we're standin' in the road there's a clear view into the front room, an' what's goin' on there makes Higgins an' me want to hang on to one another's necks an' fair bust, laughin'.

To begin with, here's our Mister Bagshaw, sittin' in a chair an' lookin' as if he's swallowed the mainmast and it isn't agreein' with him. Opposite, in another chair, happy as you please an' with a big drink in his fist, sits Ole. I b'lieve I've indicated before that he was as handsome a big beggar as you'd see in a month o' Sundays—but in that room, facin' little Tuppence-ha'penny, he's glorious. There ain't no other word for it—glorious. Until you come to look at his half-baked, five-year-old mug, an' then any man'd shrug his shoulders an' go on to somethin' else.

Yes, that's so—any man; but not any woman. There's two of 'em in there—a stout old party in some kind of a silk get-up, draped about her very stylish, and a girl. The old woman's mostly native, with a coffee-an'-milk complexion an' a stud in the side of her nose; but the girl's pretty near clear white, an' mighty sweet, in a loose-lipped, big-eyed kind of fashion. An' she an' the missus are all over Ole; there ain't no doubt about that.

"Merr-ia!" says Higgins. "Will you look at that?"

Well, it was cert'nly worth lookin' at. As far's we could figure out, Ole'd gone bargin' in there, amiable, after Bagshaw, an' the mate had tried to shove him out. Then the woman had interfered, all on account of Ole's fatal beauty, it seemed. Anyhow, Bagshaw hadn't done himself a particle o' good with 'em—I see the girl give him a very old-fashioned look or two as she's attendin' on the Swede.

"What'll he do now?" says I.

"Don't see what line he's goin' to take, all the same," Higgins says. "Can't very well object to 'em treatin' a guest civil."

Nor he could, o' course—Ole was a guest, just the same as him, and he couldn't go tellin' 'em the big lump was only a deckhand an' cracked at that. At least, not them women he couldn't. And there was no men about; old Da Silva wasn't visible at Greenwich then.

SO there was our Mister Bagshaw, havin' to sit tight an' watch this loony bein' waited on hand and foot by his best girl an' her ma, an' not

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bein' able to do a bloomin' thing about it. Pretty state of affairs, eh? His face'd sour the milk, seein' Ole settin' there grinnin' an' bein' made much of.

"He'll go pop in a minute!" says Higgins.

Well, it looked like it—there wasn't anyone with the amount o' side Bagshaw carried was goin' to stick that sort o' thing very long—an' then it got worse. The girl takes Ole by the sleeve. We can see her gesturin' towards the veranda, an' the old lady opens the French window.

"Whew!" I says. "Well, you cert'nly don't lose no time, do you?"

"Look at Ole!" Higgins whispers.

Believe me or believe me not, that great oaf's blushin' the color of a carrot! He looks at Bagshaw, pretty much in the same old way, as if he could eat him, an' swelp me, I think the mate could 'a' murdered him then an' there. It ain't exactly pleasant, seein' your best Sunday girl bein' swiped under your eyes by a thing like Ole.

But Ole, he's got different notions, seemin'ly. He drags back from the girl.

"Yaw!" says he. "But me, I got gal—got plenty gal way home. You go him!"

An' he points to Bagshaw, that's sittin' there lookin' like the devil served cold.

"You go him—he good man!" he says.

"*Non, non, non!*" says the girl, very persuadin'. "You come wit' me—"

An' she goes on, tuggin' at his sleeve, while Ole's turnin' all the colors o' the rainbow. Bagshaw's shakin' like he's in the ague, but he makes a shot at doin' the dignified.

"Come, come, Zelie!" says he. "We've had enough of this stuff an' nonsense. A joke's a joke— You go along, me man!" he says to Ole in a choked kind of a voice. "I'll see you in the mornin'!"

Well, you'd think that under the circs that'd be enough to send Ole full steam out o' there. But no—he's that big a fool he don't know when to come in out o' the wet. Instead, he fair rushes on his doom.

"Yaw!" says he to the girl. "He good man! He lak marry you, Ay tank!"

Now o' course that was just the one bloomin' word our Mister B. didn't want to hear around that house. He'd the best of all possible reasons—she lived in Birkenhead, an' took in roomers—for not wantin' to raise any marryin' palaver here in Goa. 'Strewth, I thought he'd have ruptured himself!

"You — you — you —" he says, gobblin' like a prize turkey-cock with the colic.

BUT what Ole'd said didn't make a particle o' difference. The girl was all over him still, pawin' him, an' without any eyes for old Highty-tighty there in the chair. Mighty tasty piece o' goods she was, too, like lots o' them banana-skins. Dunno but what I —but there, that ain't strictly belongin' to this yarn.

"You come!" she says, smilin' fit to split. "Mamma stay here with him!"

"What's that?" says Bagshaw. "Why, you — you designin' young hussy! Let him alone at once, d'ye hear? He's only a—"

She turns round an' makes a face at him. "Get away—old monkey!" she says. "You hear me—with you I am fineesh! This man, ah, 'e is lovelee!"

An' she rubs her cheek against Ole, while Bagshaw stands there gibberin' like a baboon. Then Ole tears it—right across he tears it.

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"*Na, na, na, na!*" he says. "I no want you. *He* want you — he want marry you. You go him!"

An' at that he fair takes an' hands her to Bagshaw—on a platter, you might say. That is, he gives her what he thinks is a gentle little push—the kind o' thing you give a packin'-crate when it's jammed in the falls—an' there she goes, spinnin' an' slidin' across the floor, an' brings up smack-dab in Mister Bagshaw's breadbasket.

Lumme! (Chardis laughed.) I've heard some fireworks in me time, but what that young girl said to Bagshaw then made the rest of 'em sound like a maiden's prayer, I give you me word. It was in Portugoose mostly, o' course, an' one had to guess at the best bits of it—but it didn't take much guessin'. An' finally, while Bagshaw's still puffin' an' blowin', grampus-fashion, she hauls off an' lands him one over the chops you could've heard in—in Siam.

"Peeg!" she says. "Uglee peeg! I kill you!"

Bagshaw staggers back. "Why, hell's fire an' perdition!" he splutters. "You mind what you're about, you—"

But that's as far as he gets, for there's the devil broke loose in that room—an' Bagshaw's his meat, if you get me. The girl starts screamin' fit to bust an' clapperclaws the mate's face with her nails till it's fair runnin' blood. The old lady, who's been lookin' on puzzled-like, cuts loose too — an' between the pair of 'em, believe you me, they've got our Mister Bagshaw in a pretty mess. Yeah, they fair knock hell out of him—an' in the middle of the rumpus, just when Higgins an' me's tryin' to keep from bein' sick laughin', the door opens in a hurry, an' here's old Da Silva, an' he's got a gun.

"What's all this?" he says in Portugoose—or words to that effect.

He don't look to me the kind o' feller to get foolin' with, neither. There's a kind of a set to his mouth, and he's glarin' somethink tremenjus.

"By cripes!" I says to Higgins. "Here's where we'll have to take a hand!"

WELL, it looked like it. Them two women's still carryin' on like a couple o' hyenas, an' Bagshaw's tryin' to dodge 'em an' explain all at once, an' Ole's standin' there with his silly mouth wide open, lookin' like a codfish. I reckon he's wonderin' in his fool mind what it's all about. Da Silva's fingerin' the gun an' lookin' more like murder every minute.

"Come on!" I says to Higgins. "We gotta stop this!"

An' then there's a fat chuckle behind us—the skipper. Might ha' known he'd be handy somewhere.

"Just a bit, gentlemen!" says he. "I'll be just as glad if you'll stay where you are. This little entertainment isn't concluded yet!"

While we've been talkin', Bagshaw's got a word in edgeways, an' whatever it was, it don't seem to please old Da Silva a whole lot. He looks across at Ole.

"So?" he says. "A common seaman, eh? You hear, Zelie?"

She pouts—she's still got Ole by the sleeve—an' swings her skirts.

"I do not care, me!" she says. "He is a man, and not a—a big ape!"

Old Da Silva lets go both barrels in his Portugoose, an' by the sound of it he's not leavin' out very much. Then he seems to make up his mind all at once, an' goes to the door leadin' back into the house. He calls, and a man comes out—a priest, by the Lord!

"Phew!" I says. "This is gettin' kind of hot, ain't it?"

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But the skipper only chuckles again. "Wait!" he says. "I'm inclined to think somebody's goin' to learn somethin' for his good. And for ours!" he adds under his breath.

Da Silva's talkin' a blue streak again now, with the priest noddin' away like an old idol. The girl's dropped Ole; she's gone as white's a ghost, an' she's lookin' this way an' that, like she wants to run. Her ma's begun to cry—and as for Bagshaw! Well, I'll trouble you to imagine Bagshaw, when the priest hauls out his little book, an' grins at him with a dilly-dilly-duck-come-an'-be-killed expression.

"Lor' love a duck!" says Higgins. "He's goin' to marry 'em. It's a shotgun weddin', sir—but it's bigamy, all the same!"

The skipper nods. "True!" he says. "Very true, Mr. Higgins. Maybe it's about time we—hum, intervened!"

And with that he stumps up the veranda an' knocks at the door, just as casual as you please.

"Follow me, gentlemen!" he says.

Well, the row inside stops, an' there's a silence. Then here's Da Silva, gun and all.

"*Senhors?*" says he, surprised-like.

Cotton touches his cap. "I'm skipper of the Matoppo, sir," says he, mighty polite. "Mr. Bagshaw's ship. You've a man of mine here, too, I see. Maybe he'd better come with me. He's—well, he's . . ."

He winks and touches his head, an' Da Silva nods.

"So?" says he, comprehendin'. "It explains it, eh? You will take him, no? Or—you will enter, *senhor capitan?* We are about to . . ."

But Cotton ain't stickin' his nose inside there—no. He shakes his head.

"No, I'm sorry," he says. "I can't join you, I'm afraid. Matter of fact, I'll have to ask Mr. Bagshaw to leave as well. There's—well, there's something turned up aboard that requires him. Fresh orders by cable—we sail in the morning. Mr. Bagshaw!"

He puts the charthouse rasp into his voice, an' Bagshaw jumps.

"Aye, aye, sir!" says he.

Well, Da Silva an' the priest looks like raisin' an objection for a minute, but after all, a skipper's a skipper, an' they don't quite know where they are, dealin' with one. Da Silva looks at the girl, who's cryin' to beat fifty, and at her mother, who's in somethin' like a faint—an' then he shrugs.

"Go with God, *senhors!*" he says softly. "Perhaps now my accursed women-folk will behave themselves!"

Chardis laughed again, and thrust the dottle down in his pipe-bowl after his maddening fashion at a story's crucial point.

"And then?" I demanded testily.

He took a final gulp from his glass. "Oh, then?" he said. "Well, goin' home, with Ole ramblin' along in front of us, an' lookin' back now an' again silly-like at Bagshaw, the skipper says—

"'D'ye know,' says he, 'I'm beginnin' to think I may have been wrong this evenin', Mr. Bagshaw. I'd rather the idea that your Scandinavian friend might have been a bit in the way, somehow. But as it is,' he says, 'it occurs to me that he may have been a blessin' in disguise all round. Don't you think so, Mr. Bagshaw?'

"Bagshaw don't say nothing. He merely sighs profoundly—like a man who's been dragged back from the edge of a slippery cliff."

THE END

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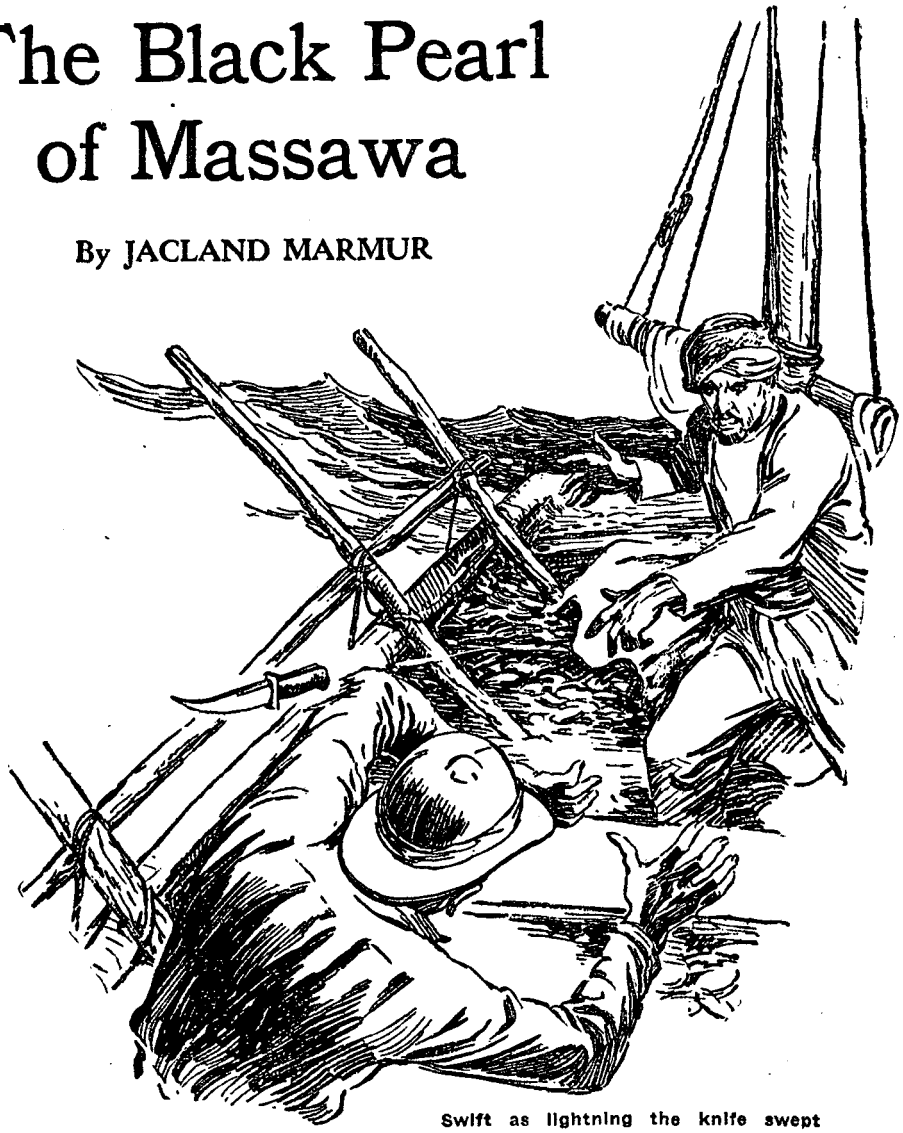
The Black Pearl of Massawa

By JACLAND MARMUR



Swift as lightning the knife swept forward

Two large matched black pearls were to cost three human lives before their true owner held them in his palm

"MASTER," said the native trader in slaves and *zebib,* "Master, we are too late. The dhow has sailed. Look."

Steve Marlowe followed the outflinging gesture of the bony brown arm. A dhow stood to the east and north on the blinding dazzle of the Red Sea. It grew steadily smaller, its dirty lateen sail dancing crazily in fetid puffs of hot wind. But on the ramshackle pearling jetty of Massawa upon which

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Marlowe and his guide stood, there was no faintest stirring of air. The sun burned with a brassy heat, and the heaving water shot reflected arrows of fire back at the white man's eyes. He seemed accustomed to it. Deep frowning grooves were burned between his brows and across the weathered skin of his forehead.

"Aye," he agreed quietly, "we are too late. The dhow has sailed."

His fine head turned with a quick alert movement. From the peak of a much-worn sun helmet, he started for an instant toward the southern roadstead beyond the coral shallows where a small immaculate schooner nodded and curtsied to him at her anchorage, as if meaning to reassure her master everything was well aboard. It was evident she had but lately arrived; her canvas was still being stowed. Young Captain Marlowe had left her and come ashore almost before her hooks bit hold.

He had a bitter business in Massawa where the Red Sea pearlers are. He stared at his ship for only a moment; then his eyes came back across the glaring water to the dipping lurching dhow, already far at sea.

"It is the dhow of the *Rais* Tulman Lal?" he asked. "You are certain?"

"I am certain."

"And to what pearling reef does he sail?"

"That no one knows."

With that swift movement of his head, Marlowe's snapping eyes shot down at the wrinkled brown face at his side.

"I know the pearling men," he warned. "They will let no man dive at a new reef without they find it out sooner or later. Tell me no fables, Grandfather!"

"I told you before, it is the dhow that disappears in the sea. Master, I do not lie. Look!"

He flung up his naked arm again. Marlowe watched the distant craft bobbing and lurching from side to side, making for the white lace of the Dahlal Reef. And then suddenly without warning the dhow merged with the shimmering blue of the sky and the sea. Marlowe blinked and strained his eyes. He waited for it to reappear out of the trough. But the desert of the Red Sea remained empty. The dhow was gone, swallowed instantly like a mirage.

"She has sunk!" he muttered.

"Then she sinks each time she goes to sea." The brown arm dropped. "Tulman Lal dives for fabulous pearls. Everyone in Massawa knows it. Ever since the white man and Tumatu, the Somali boy, died. He wants no one to know his ground. But he will be back in a day or two, with his dhow bumping the wharf here while he goes to pray in the Mosque for better success next time. Ask Tenifa, she who told him of the pearls he would one day find. It is as I say, Master. I do not lie."

"And not one of you with courage enough to follow him?"

"He is an ugly man, and dangerous." The brown dealer in *zebib* shrugged away the imputation of cowardice lightly. "It is better to be alive," he said simply.

Marlowe's hand searched the pocket of his white drill trousers.

"I will wait," he murmured, and tossed a coin to his guide. "I have business with Tulman Lal."

FOR a long time after his informant left him, Steve Marlowe remained standing alone in the stupefying heat on the seaward edge of the pearl-

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ing wharf of Massawa. He was tall and lean; and his youthful face, burned dark by sun and weather, was set in unaccustomed severity. There was a bulge under his left arm pit where a pistol was strapped to his body in the manner of the pearling men of the Persian Gulf. He had come to Massawa, as he said, because he had business there. A pearl trader's coasting dhow had brought him the news of the other side of Arabia. A white man had died somewhere on the Dahlal Reef, pearling with Tulman Lal. *Lokham,* they said; the man-killer shark. But the dead man's name, too, was Marlowe; and Sarso Steve was his brother. The saw-toothed man-eater and the devil fish of the Red Sea are not the only things that account for the cost of pearls in human blood. So Sarso Steve was in Massawa now, because he had business with Tulman Lal.

Three dhows lay bumping against the jetty at Marlowe's feet. Their characteristic stench permeated the fetid air: sour *doura* meal, decaying oyster flesh, and the nauseating odor of drying shell. Black diving boys lay sprawled in what little shade there was, naked and sweating in sleep. Shimmering heat waves radiated everywhere, rising from the water like steam, beating down from the brassy sky. Sarso Steve Marlowe mopped his forehead and turned his back on the blistering Red Sea. He went swaying along the creaking jetty into the cobbled road of Massawa.

On his left the street stretched away empty and deserted, with the tilted balconies casting razor-sharp black shadows. He left the blinding white houses of clay and native stone behind him, following the sea road into the Somali quarter. Here he stopped before a mud hovel. A wrinkled old black sat on a bench in the shade of the wall, his wide eyes staring unblinking at the dazzle of the water.

"I am looking for the house of Tenifa," he said.

"Is someone here?" the black man murmured toothlessly, without stirring.

Marlowe grimaced faintly, and patted the narrow shoulder. Deaf and blind from the diving work of his youth. This, too, Steve thought grimly, is a part of the price of pearls. He turned and stood before the open doorway. A little black boy of four or five, naked and curious, came out, looked trustfully up at him, and scampered into the sunlight.

"I am looking for the house of Tenifa," Marlowe said again.

"Then come in," a thin voice called from the gloom. "This is her house."

Stooping to clear the low lintel, he entered and stood still until his eyes slowly regained sight in the dark interior. He saw a young Somali woman seated cross-legged on the hard-packed earthen floor, looking up at him with wide black eyes. Her lips were full and thick, her nose straight and strong: a full blooded black from south of Eritrea. But her eyes! Piercing, brooding, with something terrible and arresting in them. She said nothing, simply staring. Marlowe dropped to the ground before her. They surveyed each other for a single silent moment.

"I am Marlowe," he said then in the dialect of the pearlers. "I have just come in from the Persian Gulf."

"The one they call Sarso Steve?" A light leaped into her eyes as her lips formed speech.

Marlowe nodded. "There is a thing about which I want the truth," he went on quietly. "Tenifa, they say, will know. A dealer in *zebib* told me her

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man is dead. My brother, too, is dead. What is the truth of the thing?"

THE woman stared at him intently. An eagerness animated her sad face for a moment, then slowly died away. Her ebony cheek caught flecks of gold filtering in through chinks in the shuttered window slit of the western wall. Sarso Steve, the pearling king of the Persian Gulf, sat opposite her, cross-legged, in the posture of friendliness of her own tribe. She knew about him: all the Red Sea people knew about him. But she had to be sure. She had to be sure!

"James Marlowe," she said in a soft guttural, while her penetrating eyes searched his, "the white man who was your brother, died by the jaws of the shark. I saw him no more. But this Tulman Lal told me himself."

Marlowe nodded grimly. He understood quite well her probing. She would say nothing but what he already knew until her mind became satisfied with his purpose and his integrity. It was correct and proper. It was the way of the Somali people.

"This I know," he said.

"Tumatu, who was my husband," the woman went on without pause, "sprang in the water to his aid. The white man was his friend, and Tumatu had killed a shark before with his speed and his knife. There were no others in the dhow but he and Tulman Lal. The rest were off in the pearling canoes. But the shark was too fast and made off with his kill. My man, weary already from the diving, climbed back aboard with his knife in his hand. He was exhausted, and as he came over the gunwale unaided, straining for breath and stricken with grief at what he had seen, he fell. And his own knife killed him. They brought him back to die in this house. I saw him. There was no sense and no blood left in him. He did not tell me this. It was Tulman Lal told me this also."

All this Tenifa said with a terrible quiet, her wide-lidded eyes set with fixed intensity upon the face of Sarso Steve. He heard her through without wavering, sensing the boil of emotion beneath the Somali woman's outward calm.

"When a man falls down in weariness," he said at length, "how does he fall? A man who is used to holding a pearler's knife?"

The woman's eyes blinked once. Other than this neither her face nor her voice betrayed her emotion or her hate.

"I looked for the wound," she said. "It was in Tumatu's back."

"Perhaps the wound of the shark, too, was in my brother's back?"

"Perhaps, Sarso Steve. But the shark will not tell. And who cares about the death of a diving boy?"

THERE was a long moment of silence. Outside, the waters of the Red Sea sucked at the sand of Massawa. The desert wind darted its sunset wail. A gust of stifling air blew into the dusky hut. From the jetty came the mournful crying: "*Aya la ha; aya la!*" of a native crew making sail for the nightly voyage. Steve Marlowe lifted his hand from his knee.

"The shark and the accident of a man's own hand, Tenifa, are natural things. Many men die by the one or the other in the pearling fleets of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. I cannot bring justice to a shark. This I know. But if it be a man . . . then it is a different kind of shark. Now speak, Tenifa! What is the truth of the thing?"

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"I do not know. I can only guess. But listen!" She leaned forward eagerly. All reticence fell away from her like a cloak. Her eyes blazed. Her ebony cheeks, lit up by the deepening gold of the westering sun, glittered fiercely. Her lips trembled and her white teeth gleamed as she spoke. "Tumatu died in this room. I alone saw his last agony, and I felt it as my own. He recognized no one, not even his son. But before the foam was still on his twisted lips, he said a thing in his fever . . . *'Lulu weusi!'* He spoke of a black pearl, a perfect black pearl as large as a large round pea . . . Then he died. A black pearl killed him, Sarso Steve!" the Somali woman cried. "A black pearl killed Tumatu and Marlowe, who was your brother. This I know is the truth of the thing!"

She rocked back and forth, an agony of grief in her eyes and in her dumb pitiful movement. Steve Marlowe looked at her—and thought of his brother, Jim. Yes; he had business in Massawa.

"I have heard," he whispered gently, "that Tulman Lal fishes now for fabulous pearls. It is said you have promised him many things, and every man in Massawa believes your word. Even as far as the island of Sarso in the Persian Gulf we have heard of Tenifa, the seventh daughter of a seventh son."

The woman ceased her rocking motion. The shadow of a bitter smile crossed her lips. Her eyes went dull and lusterless.

"Aya," she agreed. "I have promised him much because there was no other way to keep him in Massawa until my son grows to take justice in his hands. Today his limbs are feeble and his hands are weak. Tomorrow, the son of Tumatu will be a man, with strength and cunning enough to learn the truth, and to avenge a death. For this reason I promised him much."

"I cannot wait so long, Tenifa."

"GOOD. Then listen! If Tulman Lal has such a pearl, and for it killed the white man who owned half his dhow, and Tumatu who was his friend—in half a day he would sail for the pearl traders of Alexandria to dicker there for his fortune. This you know as I do. He would be gone. Massawa would see him no more, and the truth could never be known. I could not hold him here with my arms, for a woman's strength is nothing. I can hold him here by the greed of his own brain! That same night, I told him what he would one day find on the Dahlal Reef. *Two* matched black pearls as large as large round peas; two pearls that would cost three human lives before the true owner held them glittering nakedly on his palm. And the thought of that fabulous fortune was already in his eyes, and his limbs trembled already that night with greedy desire. One he had already; the other waited for him on the Dahlal Reef. Where one was found, another could also be found. Tenifa—so he thought in his brain—can know nothing of the one black pearl; yet I have it. She must be speaking the truth. I will wait and capture the other pearl also. Two matched black pearls worth the ransom of a king! This I know he thought as I spoke to him. I read it on his face and in the fever of his eyes . . . So no one will know of the one pearl until the other is found. Tulman Lal will not leave Massawa without it now. This was my ruse to keep him here until I learned the truth without doubt. More than this I cannot tell you; and even this much no man

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knows but you, Sarso Steve. The truth of two men's death I must know. I can only guess. And yet to kill a man in vengeance you must be sure."

"Aye, Tenifa, you must be sure."

Steve Marlowe stood up at last and looked down on her. She returned his stare openly, frankly. She had made her judgment of Sarso Steve. She did not regret it.

"You, too, would have been Tumatu's friend," she said.

"I am sure of it . . . I will be back when I am sure of the other thing also."

He turned, stooped through the low doorway, and stepped into the sunset light shattering itself across the desert and upon the dancing caps of the awakening Red Sea. The wind was hot and full of fever. The sun dove headlong under the horizon, leaving a fan of flame in the west. Steve Marlowe walked swaying along the road toward the little café beyond the pearling wharf. Here he sat down on the cobbled terrace, staring out toward where his schooner lay at anchor, already winking her lights at him. He had much to think about.

THE next day, and the day following, found him seated always at that little table commanding a view of the pearling wharf. He sipped the bitter Eritrea wine and waited. For the finding of pearls or justice a man must have much patience, and Sarso Steve had searched for both often enough to know this. On the evening of the second day, just as the thirteen stars of the hot season came glittering into the darkening heavens, the dhow for which he waited came in from the sea and made fast to the tottering jetty posts. Marlowe watched as the lateen sail was stowed, and saw the bearded master climb to the wharf. He set down his earthen mug. The figure came swinging insolently along the cobbled street, growing larger as he approached in the dusk. Without rising, Sarso Steve called out—

"Are you the *Rais* Tulman Lal?"

The dark shape spun about on a heel and stopped short. It was growing rapidly darker. Inside the café the lanterns were lit, and the yellow light flung itself out on the cobbles of Massawa. Marlowe saw a swarthy face beneath a dirty turban, the hooked nose, the glittering eyes, and the brutal lips of a native pearling master. He called quietly again—

"I seek the *rais* of the dhow that disappears in the sea."

Tulman Lal came forward, the light on his face. Then suddenly he stopped short. His eyes went wide. A deep bass exclamation of dismay, almost terror, broke from his throat. Marlowe laughed lightly.

"Sit down. It is not a ghost you see. Look!" He turned his cheek to the light and tapped it with his finger. "The one who is dead had a scar here. You remember? I am his brother, the one they call Sarso Steve. We looked very much alike, Tulman Lal. You see—we were twins."

Tulman Lal let the breath escape his lungs with a great expiring sigh. He came erect again, and the fierce light of truculence came back to his little coal-black eyes.

"What do you want?" he growled.

"Pearls, Tulman Lal. Black peals!"

"I have none." The pearler made an angry gesture with his fist and half turned away. "Have your fun, you and all the rest," he snarled. "One day I will show you all—"

"Then you have not found them yet?" Marlowe interrupted softly.

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"Good. I do not jest. I can help you."

Tulman Lal turned back, arrested by the calm dominance of Marlowe's voice, and then abruptly dropped in a chair opposite Sarso Steve. "Speak!"

Marlowe leaned back and folded his arms. Strange flecks of light were in his eyes as he sat opposite the man who held the secret of his brother's death. He gauged the pearler and made his decision. Craft, cruel, ruthless, consumed by an overpowering greed; this was the man he dealt with.

"Tulman Lal," he said with slow deliberation, "if Tenifa's words are true, there are two matched black pearls somewhere on the Dahlal Reef for you. Two such pearls are worth—anything you chose to ask for them. You are not a fool; you know this. Tomorrow at sunrise then, I will sail with you and show you where they—"

The pearler's beard shot forward. His huge fist clenched tightly on the little table. His voice was hoarse.

"No one sails with me!" he spat out. "The pearls are mine!"

"If you find them."

"I will!"

Sarso Steve shrugged his shoulders, but his eyes were unblinking.

"You forget that one-half your dhow belonged to Jim Marlowe, and one-half your gain and loss is his. He is dead now. I am his brother. One-half your dhow belongs to me."

"How much do you want for . . ."

"I do not sell. I, too, am a pearler."

"Then—"

"Then listen to me, Tulman Lal." Marlowe leaned forward. He knew how to drive a bargain with the people of the East. "It was not you who found how to make your dhow invisible so that others could not follow to your pearling reef. I am no fool, and I know this. It was Jim Marlowe showed you the trick. Am I right?" He hesitated. The pearler merely pursed his thick lips, saying nothing, but Sarso Steve knew he had touched truth. "He was my brother. I loved him very much. He had an instinct for pearl oysters, a sixth sense which some men possess and others do not. It is a thing which cannot be learned. Am I right? When he died, you lost the secret. You will find no pearls without it. I offer it to you again."

AGAIN Marlowe hesitated, his eyes boring at the other. A strange game this, a probing and a testing in the dark to touch some hidden vulnerable spot beneath the tough exterior of his antagonist. A struggle of cunning and crafty skill. There was no other way of discovering truth against such a man. Yet, if there was a black pearl hidden somewhere on Tulman Lal, then the probe of Madlowe's quiet words must have touched something behind that bearded impassive face opposite him, a heavy bloated face in which only the white eyeballs gleamed and danced in the yellow light. For Jim Marlowe must have helped to find that pearl if it existed—and found death at the same time. There was no way of knowing. It was like stalking a wild cat in a jungle. Tulman Lal hissed out his breath and inhaled noisily again. He said nothing. Sarso Steve went on:

"Consider then," he urged softly. "It is two matched pearls that wait for you, for us. Let us say—*twin* black pearls. Jim Marlowe and I were twins. I, too, Tulman Lal, have the sixth sense of the pearling man."

He stopped speaking abruptly and leaned carelessly back in his chair. He had sent his barbs into a wilderness. What had he struck?

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The pearler's dark countenance was an enigmatic mask. But Sarso Steve saw greed and cunning flaming behind those darting half-lidded eyes. He waited in silence. The Red Sea gurgled and sucked and went burbling into the night. The smell of the desert was thick and cloying in the air. The hot wind whispered of pearls, of black pearls worth human life and a fortune in gold. Tulman Lal listened to that voice and heard its mocking enticing promise. He swallowed what was left of his mug of wine at a gulp.

"Tomorrow," he said throatily, "tomorrow at sunrise, Sarso Steve." And he stood up and stalked away into the darkness.

When the sun of the following day poured its fire down upon the heaving Red Sea, the dhow stood already far from the pearling jetty of Massawa, dipping and swaying before the hot south wind. Steve Marlowe watched in silence as the pearler skilfully maneuvered the clumsy craft through a break in the eastern barrier reef. Once through, he chocked the tiller and came forward, snarling at the Somalis and waving his arms. His shouts had little effect on the blacks, for their faces bore the stolid patience of deafness—part of their reward for constant diving in three and sometimes four fathoms of water. But they knew what he wanted. As they heaved on the fibre ropes, a thin flutter of silk broke from its stowage and rose very slowly inside the belly of the lateen sail, fitting it perfectly and glued there by the wind. Sarso Steve looked up at it. It was painted in crazy horizontal patterns of pale blue and white. Tulman Lal came aft again to his post at the tiller, showing his teeth in a crafty grin.

"The dhow," he said, "has now disappeared in the sea to all who watch it from the wharf. The hull is below the reef. The sail cannot be seen. Your brother was a clever man, Sarso Steve. And yet, too much cleverness is not good."

"Aye, Tulman Lal," Marlowe agreed, bringing his eyes away from the perfectly camouflaged sail. "Your Somali boys are all deaf?"

"They do not have to hear. The oyster does not speak. Nor do they!" he spat out suddenly.

MARLOWE nodded in silence. He understood the warning and the man. Upright at the tiller in the center of that vast and empty circle of shimmering water, Tulman Lal's face was savage and fierce, with the thin hooked nose overhanging his brutal lips. The craft sailed on in the blistering heat.

Some hours before noon, Sarso Steve started searching the floor of the reef, using a crude ground tin. Instead of metal, a sheet of thick glass had been fixed in its bottom. With this several inches below the water, and his face hidden in the upper opening, the reef's floor showed to him in a vague passing blur of coral fronds, sand and stone, with the occasional open weaving lips of oysters passing in and out of his vision. Suddenly he lifted his head and shouted aft.

"We will dive here, Tulman Lal!"

The *rais*, who had been watching him intently with his cunning little eyes, put the tiller over. The lateen sail shuddered into the wind. The Somali boys brought the cross mast down. Quickly the two dugouts went over the side, each with its two black divers. The dhow drifted off. Sarso Steve and Tulman Lal were alone.

"We will see now," the pearler growled.

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"Aye," Marlowe replied grimly, "we will see now."

In the nearest canoe a naked black stood poised in the bows with his little oyster basket fast at his waist. Then he adjusted the iron nose clasp to his nostrils and made fast the claw over the right fingers for tearing the shells loose from the ocean floor. He swallowed deep gulps of air for several moments, stood poised for an instant with all the brilliant light of the sun on his shining black body, and then dived. In each dugout one boy remained, waiting his turn, guarding against the approach of the dreaded shark. A minute passed, then another; then a kinky head broke water. The black face appeared drawn in an agony of lungs almost bursting. Air exploded from straining lips. His comrade in the canoe helped him aboard. The black ribs heaved and fell, heaved and fell. The oyster basket was emptied. The other boy clapped the iron to his nose and made ready to dive. Pearl oysters! A fortune hidden perhaps between the sealed lips of any one of those gray green shells!

IN the dhow, Tulman Lal's eyes burned with cupidity. He seemed to have forgotten Marlowe's presence. He stood up presently, waving his arms to recall the canoes. The fever was on him. He could wait no longer. The dugouts bumped the dhow's side. Quickly they flung the oysters aboard, panting with their exertions, the sweat draining down their naked chests and backs. The moment they had discharged their cargo, they paddled off again. Tulman Lal hurled curses for the smallness of their catch and dropped cross-legged at once to the bottom board, knife in hand. Feverishly he started his hunt for fortune.

From the other side of the dhow Steve Marlowe watched him through narrowed eyes. Little gasps and grunts of excitement came from the pearler's lips. A pearl he wanted, a black pearl as large as a large round pea! The shells clattered one by one from his fingers. He cursed and growled under his breath, searching the flesh, delirious with expectancy. Sarso Steve's face was set. This was the man with whom Jim Marlowe had sailed to the pearling reefs; Jim Marlowe and the husband of Tenifa. They were both dead. And yet before you killed a man in vengeance you had to be sure; you had to be sure!

Quietly Steve reached for the first shell on his side of the dhow; opened it; searched the flesh expertly with his fingers; dropped it, and reached for another. The dhow had drifted far. The dugouts were better than a quarter of a mile away. The Somali boys were intent on their harrowing work. Sarso Steve looked up.

"This," he said, "this is the reef where Jim Marlowe died?" There was no answer. "Tumatu, too, died here?"

"Open the oysters!" Tulman Lal's head snapped up in a gesture startling and swift. "Open! Open! There is a pearl somewhere in one of them. Twin black pearls! Show me your sense for the oyster that hides the pearl!"

His head shot down again to his work. The pearling dhow rocked and dipped drunkenly in the oily swells. The cross mast creaked. Suddenly Marlowe dropped the shell and the knife from his hand and leaped to his feet.

"Look!" he cried.

Tulman Lal looked up. His eyes went wide. Between thumb and forefinger Sarso Steve held a round black

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thing that caught all the light of the sun in one fierce stab of fire. The *rais* stared. His jaw went slack and then clamped shut. Greed and a flame of triumph twisted his face as if in agony. Slowly and stiffly he came to his feet. And then the flood of his realized desire swept over him in a hot surge. He shrieked aloud, thickly through the tangle of his beard.

"The pearl! The black pearl!"

Sarso Steve closed his fist on it and shot it into his pocket. "The oysters," he called back quietly. "Open the rest. By the word of Tenifa there are two. Two twin matched pearls that will cost three human lives. There will be one for you and one for me. Open the oysters, Tulman Lal."

BUT the pearler laughed and raised his knife. "There is no other," he said hoarsely. "You fool! There is no other to be found. I have it!" he shrieked. "I have it already! Jim Marlowe found the one for me, and his brother found the other. Am I fool to let you come out in the dhow and go back alive with a pearl?" He laughed soundlessly, with his teeth bare and his little eyes red as fire. "Two lives for one pearl; one for the other. This is how it was done!"

Swift as lightning his knife came back and swept forward with the arc of his arm. The blade shot through the air, an arrow of light. Sarso Steve swept his body sidewise. His eyes had never left the other's face. The steel sheared the flash of his arm. He heard the knife drop with a distinct hiss in the sea behind his back. Blood welled from the wound and drenched his sleeve.

"That, Tulman Lal, is all I wanted to know."

He remained standing with both hands free at his sides. Across the litter of the heavily rolling dhow they faced each other for the fraction of a silent instant beneath the brass of a blistering sky. Tulman Lal laughed again from deep in his chest.

"It is good," he snarled, "it is good to have diving boys who are deaf."

His hand shot for his waist where his pistol was. But he had forgotten that bulge under Sarso Steve's open shirt; and he had no way of knowing what had happened many times on the coasts of the Persian Gulf.

Marlowe's bloody left arm hung stiffly at his side. But his right hand swept up across his chest. An automatic glittered, cold and blue in the dazzling sunlight. It seemed to Tulman Lal in that split second before the end that the weapon had leaped of its own accord into the white man's hand. His eyes widened with alarm and sudden terror. But it was too late. Three shots crashed into the stillness. The first bullet caught the pearler square in the chest and spun him half around. His own shot whistled over the sea. The third bullet stung his flinching body as he fell limply across the gunwale. His pistol dropped into the sea from his nerveless fingers. He lay quite still, like a man with a broken back, half in the dhow, half out.

A thread of pale gray smoke cleared from before Sarso Steve's set face. He stood motionless for an instant. Then a strange thing happened in his eyes.

"It's all right, Jimmy," he said softly to himself. "It's all right now."

THEN he crossed the waist of the rolling dhow, holstering his gun. He plucked the winding-cloth from the dead man's head. Expertly his fingers searched the tangle of oily black hair until they found what he

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knew was hidden there. He looked down on the palm of his hand where a pearl lay innocently. A little sphere of liquid fire, sending off a hundred arrows of light. Green it was in the shadow, and then black as burnished jet in the sun, sparkling, radiating its natural orient, a thing of dark mystery and blacker beauty. Marlowe's lips twitched grimly. He could see it, set in white gold or platinum, dark fire in the brooch at the marble-white throat of some lovely woman on Bond Street or Fifth Avenue. The black pearl of Massawa that had cost already three human lives!

A gust of wind sent the dhow spinning down into the trough of a swell. He heard a guttural crying far off across the sea and looked up.

"*Huh! Uha! Huh!*" the black boys were crying the shark call, though none of them could hear, while their thin arms waved desperate warning from one canoe to the other.

The dhow wallowed down and dipped her rail suddenly. Almost in the same instant Sarso Steve saw the darting triangular fin, and heard a loud splash behind his back. He spun about. The body of Tulman Lal was gone. The rolling dhow had spilled it in the sea. That dark razor-like fin swerved in its course, shearing the purple water. Bubbles of blood soiled the sea. The Somali boys pointed and shouted hysterically; then dug their paddles in terror to gain the safety of the dhow.

They came aboard shuddering. Sarso Steve was alone, binding up his wounded arm. He waved to them. They shrugged their shoulders and went about raising the cross mast and the sail. Deafness they had won already from the pearling reefs of the Red Sea. It was better for black boys, they knew, to be dumb as well.

It was late evening when Marlowe stood again before the house of Tenifa. She came out as his shadow fell across the doorway, with the son of Tumatu clinging to her calico trade skirt.

5

"YOUR prophecy has been fulfilled," Sarso Steve said simply. "The two black pearls are found."

He held them out on his open palm. She looked down at the two scintillating things, and then up again at him.

"I want no pearls." Her eyes glittered. "I know their price."

"Aye; these pearls are dear. Tulman Lal is dead." The black woman's eyes flamed, and then went dull. "He died, Tenifa," Sarso Steve went on, "by the same shark that killed my brother."

"It was true then?"

"It was true. I made sure. The pearls are yours, Tenifa. Tumatu was my brother's friend."

He stretched out his palm again. Tenifa shook her head. Then her large sad eyes lowered to his outreached hand.

"I will take one of them then, Sarso Steve," she said quietly at length, "so that I may show it to my son when I tell him of his father and his friend."

She took one of the little spheres and, smiling strangely, held it in her hand. Sarso Steve understood, and nodded.

"Send him to me, Tenifa," he said, "when he becomes a man and can sail a ship. Send him to me in the Persian Gulf. I will show him the other pearl then."

He turned and marched off into the dusk.

But Tenifa, the black Somali woman, remained standing before her hut beside the Red Sea.

THE END

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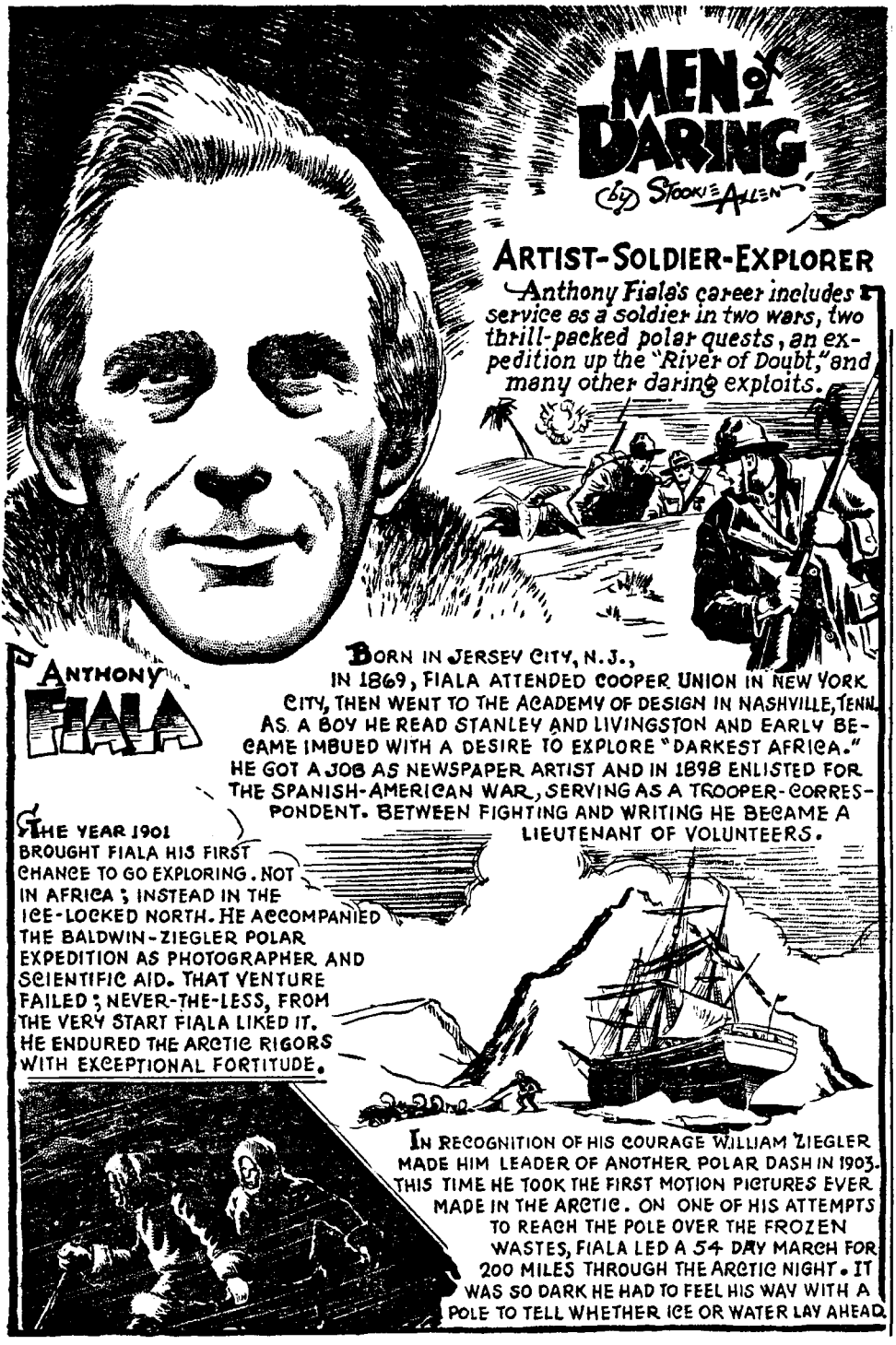
MEN of DARING
(by) STOOKIE ALLEN
ARTIST-SOLDIER-EXPLORER
Anthony Fiala's career includes service as a soldier in two wars, two thrill-packed polar quests, an expedition up the "River of Doubt," and many other daring exploits.
ANTHONY FIALA
BORN IN JERSEY CITY, N.J., IN 1869, FIALA ATTENDED COOPER UNION IN NEW YORK CITY, THEN WENT TO THE ACADEMY OF DESIGN IN NASHVILLE, TENN. AS A BOY HE READ STANLEY AND LIVINGSTON AND EARLY BECAME IMBUED WITH A DESIRE TO EXPLORE "DARKEST AFRICA." HE GOT A JOB AS NEWSPAPER ARTIST AND IN 1898 ENLISTED FOR THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR, SERVING AS A TROOPER-CORRESPONDENT. BETWEEN FIGHTING AND WRITING HE BECAME A LIEUTENANT OF VOLUNTEERS.
THE YEAR 1901 BROUGHT FIALA HIS FIRST CHANCE TO GO EXPLORING. NOT IN AFRICA; INSTEAD IN THE ICE-LOCKED NORTH. HE ACCOMPANIED THE BALDWIN-ZIEGLER POLAR EXPEDITION AS PHOTOGRAPHER AND SCIENTIFIC AID. THAT VENTURE FAILED; NEVER-THE-LESS, FROM THE VERY START FIALA LIKED IT. HE ENDURED THE ARCTIC RIGORS WITH EXCEPTIONAL FORTITUDE.
IN RECOGNITION OF HIS COURAGE WILLIAM ZIEGLER MADE HIM LEADER OF ANOTHER POLAR DASH IN 1903. THIS TIME HE TOOK THE FIRST MOTION PICTURES EVER MADE IN THE ARCTIC. ON ONE OF HIS ATTEMPTS TO REACH THE POLE OVER THE FROZEN WASTES, FIALA LED A 54 DAY MARCH FOR 200 MILES THROUGH THE ARCTIC NIGHT. IT WAS SO DARK HE HAD TO FEEL HIS WAY WITH A POLE TO TELL WHETHER ICE OR WATER LAY AHEAD.

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HIS SHIP, THE AMERICA, SANK AFTER BEING CRUSHED BY ICE. THE PLUCKY PARTY WAS STRANDED ON THE ICE CAP FOR TWO YEARS. RESCUED AT LAST BY A RELIEF EXPEDITION, ALL BUT ONE MAN HAD SURVIVED. THEY HAD SUBSISTED ON THE CACHED STORES OF FORMER EXPEDITIONS.
AS OUTFITTER AND MEMBER OF COLONEL THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S "RIVER OF DOUBT" BRAZILIAN EXPEDITION IN 1912, FIALA HAD SOME OF HIS CLOSEST CALLS. WHILE LEADING ONE OF THREE EXPLORING PARTIES HIS BOAT CAPSIZED IN THE "RAPIDS OF THE DEVIL," PART OF AN UNEXPLORED JUNGLE STREAM. THOUGH AN EXPERT SWIMMER, HE HAD A TOUGH TIME KEEPING AFLOAT. HE HAD GONE DOWN TWICE WHEN A NATIVE BENT A SMALL TREE SO THAT FIALA COULD HAUL HIMSELF OUT.
FIALA TOOK PART IN THE MEXICAN BORDER CAMPAIGN OF 1916-17. HE WAS MADE A MAJOR IN THE WORLD WAR BUT THE ARMISTICE CAME BEFORE HE GOT TO FRANCE. TODAY HIS BUSINESS IN NEW YORK IS THAT OF OUTFITTING EXPLORERS, AND HE LECTURES ON THE SIDE. HE HAS NOT YET SUCCEEDED IN GETTING TO AFRICA, BUT HE STILL WANTS TO GO.

Next Week: Lt. E. M. Roberts, Adventurer and War Hero

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The Steam and the Glory

By WILLIAM EDWARD HAYES

Author of "The Bright Forest," "Blood on Steel," etc.

Novelette—Complete

A train load of passengers on the extra fare special were trapped in a tunnel—and only one man could rescue them

Crandall was vaguely aware of going toward his cab

CHAPTER I.

HIGH IRON.

NATURE hung the backdrop for the drama. The sky and the earth were one in smoke-gray shrouds over the cheerless wastes of the Jersey meadows. In the murk was the stage, four main tracks of railroad, gleaming dull silver against the gray-black of the ballast. A cold rain fell—slow, insistent.

It was, in color and aspect, not unlike countless other mornings in Crandall's long and sometimes contentious years. Crandall sat erect, spring steel beneath patched and faded overalls, in the right-hand cab window of Engine

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3436. The high-wheeled passenger hauler blasted a stuttering thunder from her iron throat. Fourteen sleek steel Pullmans, beaded with oily wetness, slid along in the merciless pelt of her cinders. The fancy *Hudsonion,* varnish and plush de luxe, eastward extra fare stepping through the dew!

Crandall squinted against the drive of the rain to pick out the guiding green of the signal lights, his old eyes clear and defiant behind stiff lashes. He saw come out of the gray, the long familiar sights — whistle posts and signal bridges, the lights like green and red and yellow gems strung high on shadowy girders; cross-overs, spurs and squat brick towers. They were all there, as they always had been. Everything was the same and yet everything was somehow bitterly different.

Boiling out of the shrouding mist on the main iron to Crandall's left, the *Aztec* hurled itself, in smoke and thunder, westward. Her hoghead flung a lusty whistle call to Crandall, who whistled back mechanically, and even in that quick-blown greeting there was a strange, disturbing note—something of a grim and glorious good-by.

There were all the long familiar sights and Crandall took them in with a nameless ache behind his swinging watch chain. Then there was something else, something neither old nor familiar. Tall red poles of steel lined the right of way, marching against him endlessly, a slim, relentless legion. Overhead, in the flattened plume of his smoke, was the dull sheen of new copper. He would not look at it, but he knew it was there, alive with a power which was not of his knowledge and which could not be accepted in his world.

That it had been accepted by the men who ruled his world was, to him, incredible. A railroad without steam, without this symphony of power in the magnificent beat of a working engine's pulse! The ache in his middle sharpened. He remembered ironically how he and the other old heads had boasted this day would never come.

"These electrics," they had said, "they're all right in the tunnel under the river. Sure. They got their place. But out on the main line! Hunh!" What vast scorn! "Why, them things, they'll never see the high iron!"

The old heads had said that in their cocky, old-head way. They remembered when the talk first started. It was after the tunnel from the Gotham station had been completed under the river with a third rail for power. The electric locomotives had been put into service through the tunnel and out to Hudson Exchange, a few miles west of the river tunnel portal on the Jersey side. A master mechanic had made a speech in which he'd predicted the eventual end of steam. The old hands had laughed and made their boast that such a day would never come.

The day was here. The thought of it sent Crandall's lips into a tight, straight line as though to meet the pain behind the set of his lean, leathery jaws. Tomorrow would mark the end. Tomorrow, at 10.45 A.M., he would back his long-barrelled 3436 onto the gleaming Pullmans of the *Aztec,* westward, at the Hudson Exchange platform. Four minutes later, with all couplings made and air brakes tested, his conductor would raise his arm. Crandall would open his throttle. The last steam schedule to operate on the Atlantic Division would be on its way.

Mr. Pretty, the public relations man, had told Crandall that because he was the road's senior engineer, the schedule for official transference from steam

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to juice would be arranged to enable Crandall to haul the last steam job west. Crandall would have this honor. Mr. Pretty had hinted about reporters and news photographers. Honor! Forty years on the right-hand side. Forty years behind a polished throttle bar. Incredible that tomorrow, for him, would be the end.

HE heard his son George speaking through the mist and the pulsing roar of his running. His son George was saying, "You oughtn't to be like that, Rip." They all called Crandall Rip because that best described the way he hauled the fast ones. He ripped 'em along. George, speaking quietly, "Listen, Rip! This juice. It hadda come. You know that. Look at me. I'm a steam-bred man, too. Same as you. Why, I cut my eye teeth on an air hose gasket. You know that. It wasn't easy for me to lay down the steam and take my course of instructions on how to run these juicers. You oughtta do it, too, Rip."

But Crandall had snorted as he always snorted at the very name of juice.

"Me? A motorman?" He snorted his scorn.

"Lissen, kid. I'm a steam man till I die. See? These juicers is all right for the hole under the river. But on the high iron—well, I'm tellin' you, George, when you show me these electrics can do somethin' my steam hog won't do . . . "

George wouldn't show him. George couldn't show him. No one could. They could talk about cleanliness, speed, economy, smoothness. Why, he could take this old 3436, and aside from the soot and the smoke, he could out-pull, out-run—

A yellow signal flashed out at him, and his gnarled hand gripped his air valve. The platform at Hudson Exchange assumed shape in the veil, and presently slid beneath his slowing cab.

Crandall saw the electric on the main ahead of him as he eased to a precision stop. He glared at the waiting juice box while a crew of experts got in behind his tender and cut him loose. A dwarf signal changed ahead of his pilot and a switchman gave him the sign to shove ahead. He rolled into the spur beside the main.

The electric backed down on the *Hudsonion*. From the window of his cab George Crandall's wide face looked out. Rip met his son's quiet eyes.

George said, "Nice trip, ol' timer?" in the voice of a man who speaks with quiet, assuring cheer in the face of death.

Crandall said, "Yunh!" George could interpret as he wished. Crandall turned from George's kindly contemplation. Why in hell did they all have to talk to him and treat him as though he stood at the end of life?

Then Brumbaugh, the terminal train master, came up under Crandall's cab. He was a little, thin man with quick, jerky movements.

"Be in Mr. Pretty's office this afternoon at four," Brumbaugh called up. His shoulders were hunched under his long slicker.

"Pretty's office?" Crandall jerked around quickly and glared down at the officer. There was a tightening up inside him.

"Little rehearsal," Brumbaugh said. "Somethin' you gotta say tomorrow at the ceremonies."

"Ceremonies," Crandall said as if addressing himself contemplatively.

"Gonna send you away nice, Rip," Brumbaugh said.

"Send who away where?" There was belligerence in Crandall's sharp-

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ened tone. His right fist was a hard knot. His lips twisted grimly.

"Where the hell you think?" Brumbaugh demanded. "Retirin', ain't you?"

Crandall spat savagely. He hadn't said so. He had dreaded the mention of that word.

"You wouldn't take trainin' to run the juicers," Brumbaugh accused with a cold smile. "You either gotta be converted, or take your pension. You got six years before age'd get you, but since you're too damned contrary . . . "

The wind shifted to the north. It's bite was cold.

CRANDALL stood grimly silent in the presence of the mighty. Mr. Pretty, the public relations man, studied a typewritten sheet on his desk. Mr. Crosby, the general manager, found much of interest in the tip of his cigar. Big George kept his eyes averted. He couldn't help but know of the pain behind his father's steely glare. Crandall stood like the last of a mighty army, defiant in the face of his overwhelming enemies. And yet they were not enemies because on their faces was only sympathetic concern which, as Crandall viewed it, made things all the tougher. He reflected that he might have escaped this ordeal by simply taking time out and letting somebody else wheel the final run. But that would be quitting, and he had never quit before.

Mr. Pretty said, in the tone of one feeling his way cautiously, "You understand how it is, Mr. Crandall. It won't take much effort. And I've written it down, just as you should say it for the benefit of the newsreel sound effects, and also the reporters. This is a major event in transportation history. It will be covered adequately by every newsgathering agency. That's why we'd like to have your full coöperation. So if you'll read this over . . . "

Crandall took the paper suspiciously. He was conscious of the bitter wind, stabbing at the windows, rattling them. The gray murk, with the afternoon, had thickened. Now, at a little past four, it was growing darker.

The defiant eyes traced over the written lines.

Suddenly Crandall's chin jutted. He scowled at Mr. Pretty.

"This here," Crandall blurted, "says I'm steppin' out. Retirin'!"

Mr. Pretty colored and looked at the general manager for help.

The general manager said quietly, "You don't expect to stay on the active list of runners, do you? Especially since you've refused to learn the electrics."

"I might take me a yard engine," Crandall snorted.

Mr. Pretty frowned. It was as if he could already see glaring headlines: VETERAN ENGINEER, LOYAL TO STEAM, LAYS DOWN LIMITED FOR SWITCHER. Mr. Pretty knew newspaper men. He knew, apparently, that a good copy reader would find a much better story under that heading than in a simple yarn about steam giving way to modern mechanical and engineering progress.

"Yard engine?" the general manager's brows arched. "There won't be any steam left there in another few months, even less. No, Rip, you've had your chance. You've consistently refused to accept the new order. Don't be a hard loser. We can't retard progress, you know, just to humor you old war horses."

Crandall faced the general manager's tired eyes. Crandall knew his

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yard engine threat was all bluff. The old fellows who were hanging on to the yard jobs weren't qualified for anything else. He'd never bump a one of them off. He knew the general manager was calling the bluff on him.

"Those reporters," the general manager said, "will ask you questions tomorrow, Rip. Your cab'll be full of 'em. They'll ask you what you think of this change. You'll answer 'em like Mr. Pretty's written it down for you. Get that?"

Crandall got it. Mr. Crosby had not raised his voice, but there was force behind it. Flame came up his old spine. His neck went red.

"What's that paper say?" the general manager queried.

CRANDALL found the answer, "It says: 'I feel electricity is steam's master because of superior pulling power, economy of operation . . . '" He heard his voice in the dull monotone of one who is not accustomed to reading aloud. He got through with it and felt that his lips had uttered blasphemy.

"Remember," Mr. Pretty said, "those reporters'll be hanging on to every word. Your answers must be perfect. Otherwise the story—"

"You be on the ground, Pretty," the general manager said, "to answer for him in case his memory fails."

Mr. Pretty nodded. He turned to the younger Crandall. "Come here, George."

Father and son faced one another in front of the desk. Mr. Pretty handed each another typed sheet. Mr. Pretty explained:

"The way I've set the stage is this: George, you haul the *Aztec* through the tunnel in the morning with your electric engine. Then, as soon as you're cut loose at Hudson Exchange, and your father's engine backs onto the train, you come to your father's cab. The two of you shake hands. Shake hands now. We'll run over the lines."

Crandall felt the sweat on George's palm. He glared at his son and felt that somehow they both were traitors. They ought to walk out on this. They ought to refuse to have a hand in such goings on.

"Now, Mr. Crandall," the public relations man said, "when you and your father shake hands in his cab, the sound equipment will be ready. Be sure you speak distinctly for the news reels.

"Keep the picture in your mind. Father and son. The old order and the new. The old order giving way to the new. Can't you see how symbolic it all is?" Mr. Pretty was being carried away with his enthusiasm.

"Now, George," Mr. Pretty beamed, "you look at your father like this." He beamed on Rip Crandall. "You say, George, 'Well, so-long, Dad. This is your last run, your farewell to steam. Our farewell to steam.' Say it, George."

The younger engineer looked at the paper and said it, reading. He said it softly as if much afraid. He met his father's eyes and his own were misted.

"'. . . I hope, Dad,'" George read on, his palm wet within his father's loose clasp, "'I shall prove as worthy in this new field of electricity as you have been in steam. We will all miss you—'"

"Who's gonna miss me?" Crandall demanded. He jerked his hand free. "What the hell is this? My funeral?" He glared from Mr. Pretty to the general manager.

Mr. Pretty said, "Now you read, Mr. Crandall." His finger indicated

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the place on the page. He spoke very softly. "Read that right there, Mr. Crandall."

Crandall, in his dull monotone, read, "'I am proud to turn over the reins to men of your stamp. As—as the last of the steam runners, and speaking—speaking for the old steam men who blazed the trail of glory along these rails—'" His voice broke and he looked up

He blinked against a persistent mist in his eyes.

"Go on, Mr. Crandall," the public relations man prompted in a whisper.

"'—I welcome,'" Crandall faltered, "'elec—I welcome electricity and—'" He looked up sharply. He said simply, "To hell with it."

Mr. Crosby, the general manager, stood before him. "Look here, Rip," Mr. Crosby said. "We've tried to explain to you how important to the railroad this program is. Now you'll learn this and say it like it's written, or I'll be there on the platform and say it for you. And as far as you're concerned personally, I'll still give you until tomorrow to decide whether you'll take retirement or a course in being an electric hogger."

Crandall's old eyes were unflinching. He said, "Like I told you before, when somebody can show me where this here juice can shade steam, I might say I'd back down. Otherwise . . ."

"You'll learn this speech?" Mr. Crosby demanded.

Crandall glared at the sheets and folded them. He put them in his pocket and turned away. He was conscious of his son hovering over him, wanting to be kindly and helpful. He snorted and buttoned his overcoat.

Outside the main entrance to the terminal the wind staggered him against a column. Something bit at his cheeks. He looked up. Snow was falling.

CHAPTER II.

TUNNEL TRAGEDY.

THE papers quoted the weather man that evening as saying, "Probably snow; somewhat colder." Which was far wide of the mark. There was nothing probable about it. The early hours of the night produced ankle-deep slush on the rails, ballast and platforms. Then the temperature dropped with amazing speed. The slush froze. A lone telegraph operator, atop the Alleghanies, reported two feet of snow to the dispatcher. The wires were sagging. That was at midnight.

The Atlantic Division took the full brunt of the storm at 2 A.M. In fact, two storms met over the center of it. One moved up from the Potomac Valley. The other came down from Lake Ontario.

The blizzard caught the railroad asleep. Nobody had looked for a blizzard. It seemed to be there suddenly, a whirling wall of white enveloping the world. The gentlemen whose duty it was to keep switches well thawed out got behind with their work. The gentlemen who were charged with chlorine treatment of the third rail between the tunnel portal and Hudson Exchange almost never got started. When finally they did get under way, their equipment froze up on them.

Gray light eventually pierced the white, storm-battered desolation, and the call went through the roundhouse on the meadows to get out the rotary plows. The company had two of them, neither of which had been used in years. In order to operate them six

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steam locomotives had to be made ready. Three for each plow. Six steam locomotives can't be jerked into service by simply saying the word. It takes time.

The plows were just leaving the roundhouse when Crandall staggered through the blow. He hung to a telephone pole and stared at the apparitions with unholy delight. He said, "Yuh! Juice! Let it come a storm like this, an' then what?" This was a swell time to gloat.

Why didn't they put electric engines on the rotaries? Ask a steam man why. In the first place it takes weight. The juicers weren't heavy enough. In the second place the plows operated on steam. You had to have several hundred tons to buck drifts. Those three road hogs behind each plow represented some two and a half million pounds. Farewell to steam? Crandall was almost swaggering when the wind blew him up against, and then through, the roundhouse door.

Crandall pulled on his overalls, bundled himself into two sweaters beneath his worn and faded jumper. He knotted his old red bandana about his throat, pulled it down tightly to keep the snow from getting in. He left his goggles in his satchel. You couldn't use goggles in a storm like this.

Finally, adorned as he had been for many years, he took out the two sheets of paper Mr. Pretty had given him, He scowled at them; and said mockingly, "I welcome electricity and progress." He stared at the type and shook his head slowly.

"Got a swell day to sing your swan song," a brother down at the end of the row of lockers called to him. He was a steam man who, like George, had turned himself into a common motorman.

"The only song," Crandall hurled, "anybody's gonna hear today is the song of the brass hats callin' on the steam to save 'em so's traffic can move. You'll see the smoke on the trolleys like you've always seen it."

He considered his words in sudden elation. He crushed the typed pages into a ball. He raised his arm to throw the wad far from him when Mr. Pretty, from beyond the wall of the lockers, called his name.

Crandall answered, and Mr. Pretty came around into the aisle, removing a scarf from his head. He didn't look happy.

"You all right, Crandall?" Mr. Pretty asked.

"Sure," Crandall said. "I'm all right. Why?"

"You're prepared to make the statements I wrote down for you?" There was a worried note in Mr. Pretty's tone. He glanced at the wad of paper Crandall held.

"I know what to say," Crandall retorted. He tossed the wad under the locker. He spat after it. "Me? I know what to say all right." He swaggered about the room. He saw Mr. Pretty's thin face shadowed with doubt. The public relations man went to the telephone.

Presently Crandall heard that same worried note as Mr. Pretty was assuring the general manager over the company wire that everything on the Jersey side was fine. "Yes, Crandall says he's got it all down. Yes, he knows what to say."

CRANDALL spent the next half hour going over the drivers and the cab of the 3436. He lingered at grease cups and lubricator sights. He listened with expert ear to the sigh of the big compressors on

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the left-hand running board. Occasionally he glanced through the windows of the roundhouse stall to assure himself that the fury of the storm was not abating. The storm was his strong hope that this would not be the last.

He shuddered against the thought that, if the storm didn't change things, he would never stand thus again, and do these little chores. All around him were the smells and sounds of the roundhouse — wet steam, warm oil, gaseous smoke. Incredible that, by this time tomorrow, no steam would be moving. Nothing would be on the high iron but those strangely quiet boxes on wheels with wire-wrapped motors deep inside them.

The storm was still a stay of sentence. That's how it hit him when his fireman climbed up and mumbled his usual greeting. Or was it a stay? Would these whining juicers be able to stand against the snow and the wind?

Crandall blinked against the strangely persistent mist in his old eyes as he headed the engine out of the stall and onto the table. Mr. Pretty was huddled, with his head wrapped, against the backhead of the boiler. The fireman made the back and side curtains fast. The wind snapped them savagely.

The engine got on the outbound spur. A switchtender staggered through the biting swirl and made motions under the cab so Crandall would see the signal. Crandall tooted twice and felt his way along. He had to feel. He couldn't see. He had to creep over the maze of tracks, stopping now and then, whistling. And always the switchtenders had to come through the pelting fury to make arm signals by which he was guided.

Presently, under the dim outline of a signal bridge, where emerald and ruby and amethyst winked as if in sheer enjoyment of this blow, Crandall stopped and fixed his eyes upon a lower dot of red. He blasted four times on his whistle, sounding the imperious call of a road man for the right of way. The brick tower, a dozen yards away, was entirely invisible. A maintenance man with a flaming torch straightened from his job of thawing a neighboring switch.

Crandall wondered what big George, his son, would think of a day like this. He smiled bitterly as he contemplated the younger generation of engine runners. In the slang of the day they were soft, they couldn't take it.

The red eye changed suddenly to green, Crandall acknowledged the signal, whistled off, cracked his throttle. His drivers rolled over at a creep and he took the cross-over that sent him into the westbound main iron.

The drifts were piling high as the engine purred alongside the Hudson Exchange platform. No curious watchers braved the storm to see him slide through the swirl. He wondered about Mr. Pretty's well-planned ceremonies. Again the bitter smile played over his cracked lips. What a hell of a swell day to welcome the silent white power of juice! He wanted to laugh in Mr. Pretty's face. He wanted to howl out at the contention that steam was inferior to electricity. He felt a wild surge of exultation sweep him. This day would show the brass hats which sort of power would stand the test!

With expert hand, Crandall brought the engine to a halt at the edge of the platform clear of the spur switch so that his son's electric, when it brought the *Aztec* up, could slip off the main

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and allow him to back onto his train for what the brass hats had hoped would be the last time in history.

Almost as soon as the drivers had quit turning, the side curtains rattled and a lean, bundled form came through to stand in the cab and stomp snow from his booted feet. The figure got enough of his face through his coat collar to allow the occupants of the cab to identify Brumbaugh, the train master.

Brumbaugh said, "Well, by hell, it never rains but what it pours." He slapped his gloves together in a gesture of disgust. The wind stabbed at the cab windows, piled snow against them, rendered them useless for vision.

CRANDALL saw Mr. Pretty step forward impulsively. Mr. Pretty said, "You don't mean the newspaper photographers and the reporters haven't shown up!"

"They're here," Brumbaugh said. "Oh, hell, yes! They're draped all over the station master's furniture. It's not them being here. It's me wishing they weren't here. Especially since we've got orders from Crosby himself to keep 'em away from this engine, and from Crandall until we can get the railroad running again."

Crandall started. He opened his lips.

Mr. Pretty blurted, "Don't tell me something's gone wrong."

"Everything," Brumbaugh snapped. "Everything that can happen has happened." He tamped some tobacco in his pipe. Mr. Pretty clutched his sleeve.

"If there's anything I can do," Mr. Pretty said, "I'll—"

"Nothing at all," Brumbaugh replied between pipe puffs, "unless you know some way to get in the tunnel under the river and get George Crandall and his Aztec Limited outta there. You tell me how—"

"Stuck in the tunnel?" Rip demanded. His gaze was narrow and hard.

"The gents in the powerhouse," Brumbaugh explained, "picked this kind of morning to let a generator flywheel get loose from 'em, tear up half the machinery, an' bust through a wall. The net result is that there's no power in the third rail under the river. There's no lights in the Gotham terminal. There's nothing can move by juice east of this platform. Meanwhile there's a trainload of extra fare passengers in the big hole calmly freezing to death." Brumbaugh blew out a heavy cloud of evil-swelling smoke.

Crandall's old muscles stiffened. He knew his son's situation. Being in that tunnel in the cold, without power, was no joke. The tunnel electrics weren't equipped with steam boilers to heat coaches. Such steam as remained in the cars after leaving the terminal, would not last long. Not in this temperature.

Mr. Pretty quit pacing the narrow deck. He said, "My God! How long'll it take to get juice back there?"

"Nobody knows," Brumbaugh snapped. "The chief engineer said mebbe an hour, mebbe a day. The storm's a handicap."

Crandall thought of gloating. Then he found no pleasure in the thought.

Mr. Pretty moaned. "The reporters," he said. "They'll—"

"Keep 'em company," Brumbaugh ordered, "but tell 'em nothing. Not until we have to tell 'em."

"There must be some way," Mr. Pretty insisted, "to get the Aztec out—"

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"There is," Brumbaugh said. "Sure. Rip here could get it out, only . . ."

"Only what?" Rip Crandall demanded suddenly. He was tense on his cushion.

"Well," Brumbaugh said, "in the first place that's one spot where a steam jack isn't worth a hoot. Stiff grade, no way to take out the smoke and gas. In the second place it happens to be against the law to take anything in the tunnel that burns either coal or oil."

"To hell with the law," Rip said. "An' as far as the grade goes, I'll pull it." He was suddenly tingling. Here was his chance. Now he could show the brass hats that steam could win where the other power failed. "We can't let those people freeze. Let's go!" He threw over his lever, opened his throttle. The engine moved back.

Brumbaugh yelled, "Wait! I didn't say anything about going in there." He turned to the public relations man. The engine kept moving. Brumbaugh said to Mr. Pretty, "Drop off and keep your reporters company. If Rip thinks we can get away with it, we'll take a chance."

Mr. Pretty slid down into the drifts on the platform. Brumbaugh fastened the curtain through which the public relations man had vanished. Crandall watched the public relations man slip and fall; recover himself and stagger against the wind. Then Brumbaugh was tugging at his sleeve.

Brumbaugh yelled, "We'll take a chance, Rip."

Crandall saw largely in his mind the typed words of Mr. Pretty's statement. "I welcome electricity and progress." Big story. Reporters and news reels. His little speech of farewell. Farewell to steam.

Crandall's gloved hand grasped the throttle bar with vigorous intent. The exultant smile widened across his leathery face. He jerked his throttle back. Black smoke belched from the stack into the white fury.

CHAPTER III.

FAREWELL TO STEAM.

BECAUSE he had to proceed with infinite caution in his backward motion, it seemed an age before Crandall, with his head out in the storm, finally saw the yawning hole that was the tunnel portal. Crandall looked at his watch. It was close to twelve. The *Aztec* had been stalled for an hour and a half. He had a quick vision of the luxury-loving patrons walking up and down the carpeted aisles to keep warm.

The engine stopped before entering the bore. Crandall looked to windows and curtains. They had to be as tightly fastened as possible. He wasn't fooling himself on the gas danger.

"I won't have to work steam," Crandall told Brumbaugh and his fireman, "on the way down. I'll drift. Soon's we couple into George's electric, we'll all take a hand connectin' up the steam heat an' the air brakes. The gas'll be bad, so we'll have to be easy with our breath."

"You worry about the engine, Rip," Brumbaugh said. "We'll couple you on. All you gotta do is pull us out. That's where you got to be fast."

It was black in the tunnel because the failure of the power also had put an end to the electric lights. Crandall worked air on his drift. He couldn't get too much of a roll because he couldn't see more than a few yards behind him. He had his window open just enough to let his head through.

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The gas wasn't bad at all because he was leaving it behind him with every foot he moved.

After what seemed an eternity of that cautious movement, Crandall opened his whistle. He blew it sharply twice, three times. He hoped George would understand what was being done, and get out in front of his electric with a lantern so Crandall could tell where the train was.

The noise of the whistle was deafening. Each yard seemed a league. Crandall sniffed sharply. He was beginning to smell the gas now. The snow that had been frozen against his windows was melting and running down because the heat from his firebox was reflecting back from the dark walls.

Where the devil was that train? He asked himself the question as he realized he was farther under than he thought he might have to go. Then he came in sight of the train suddenly.

A lantern was waving at him in a washout stop signal. Back of the lantern was a blur of yellow along the walls, the reflected lights of the Pullmans, draining the big storage batteries, but still holding out. He whistled to answer the lantern sign, but he kept easing back until he saw the looming hulk of his son's electric immediately behind his tender. He coupled in sharply, slammed on his independent air.

"What the hell did you come down with that for?" the Aztec conductor demanded as Crandall, with Brumbaugh and his fireman, jumped in behind the tender to help make the connections.

George said, "She's got mighty high drivers, Rip." His teeth were chattering. His lips were blue in the pale yellow of the lanterns.

"It'll take you outta here," Crandall snapped. His throat stung suddenly from the acrid bite of the coal gas. He coughed, and tried to hold back as he did so. He checked his breath. George coughed.

"I got a suggestion, Rip," George said quietly. He spoke as if he wanted to be sparing of his father's feelings. "She's got high drivers. Maybe you better take part of us, an' come back—"

"Get on your juicer," Rip bawled. He threw caution to the winds. He coughed harder for it. "Get on an' button up your lip."

The fireman and the train master came out from between. There was sweat on the fireman's brow.

Brumbaugh coughed. He said, "All right, Rip. If you're ready . . . "

The noise was enough to make a deaf man hear. There wasn't much clearance above the stack. Not over twenty inches. Nor was there any more than that on either side. It was close. In two seconds it was hell.

All windows in the cab of the 3436 were closed. The curtains at the sides of the gangway, and in the back they were as secure as it was possible to make them. Yet the cab was immediately an inferno of smoke and gas, searing the nostrils, biting at the throat and lungs.

Crandall heard the thunder of the exhaust, the deep swoosh in the stack, and felt the lunge of his engine. His heart stopped, a vast coldness filled him. Attuned as he was to every sort of engine noise and throb, he knew before he had gotten his drivers out of their first spin that he was never going to handle them. Too much train on his tail. Too much for his high drivers. George had been right.

He shot sand to the wheels and the

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drivers took hold. The exhaust was deep and labored. What sort of grade was this? Straight up? He saw, through the dim haze in the cab, Brumbaugh wet his coat and put it over his nostrils, wrapping his head. He saw his fireman try to make a gas mask with the bandana he snatched from his throat. The engine throbbed on its frame.

A MILE and a half under the river! Moving out of it at no better than three miles an hour! A half hour to hang onto life. The calculation went through Rip's brain swiftly. He should have taken George's quiet suggestion. He could have taken half the train out, let the smoke clear, and then come back for the other half. Too late now! If he attempted to stop and cut in two somebody would die of asphyxiation doing the job. Somebody might die as it was.

With trembling hand Crandall reached for the little air hose in the cab which he used to swish coal dust out from his pipes and gadgets. He held it close to his chest and turned it on. It stirred the gas away from his nostrils at least. He was being very sparing with his breath. A half hour. If he could hold out that long . . .

The high wheeler coughed deeply, slowly, laboriously. With each belch from the stack the gas became worse. His headlight was on and shining brightly, and yet through his forward window Crandall could see nothing but the death-laden clouds that enveloped him, smothered him down. He thought of the passengers behind him. They were getting warm now. They wouldn't feel this smoke for a long time yet because of the way those cars were insulated.

It was getting harder and harder to see. Water rolled down Crandall's old cheeks from eyes that burned horribly. The engine frame heaved. The cough in the stack was getting down to where it sounded like a futile, sickly throb.

Abruptly the engine swooshed its last. The train stalled. Crandall put the air to the wheels, applying his brakes. The train master staggered over to him.

"We'll cut—and run—for it, Rip," the train master said through labored breathing. "Can't—pull 'em. Cut an' run—"

Crandall said nothing. The back of his neck burned. He couldn't pull 'em. He thought of his long, long boast. He could do anything with steam. He thought of the reporters, and a speech he had to make. He brushed the back of his glove across his smarting eyes. It came away wet. The train master was shaking him.

"Cut an' run—for it—" The train master staggered. Crandall saw him clutch his throat and sink down. He slumped to a heap near the fire door. He lay there without stirring.

Crandall reached throttle and sander, and then checked himself. He called himself names. No use opening that throttle and pouring more of that gaseous death into the bore. No use doing anything but cutting the engine loose. At least he could save himself and his fireman and Brumbaugh. He would leave George with his useless juice box. He would leave the de luxe job to its fate. What a hell of a way to finish his flawless years! What a way to fail!

Staggering through the curtains on his side of the cab, Crandall held his breath and dropped to the ground. He flattened himself and inched along with his lantern in front of him. He'd cut

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loose, all right. He'd run for it. He ought to get George and take George with him, though. That juicer couldn't stand this siege of gas. It wasn't air-tight like a Pullman. After all, George was his son. George was all right. He'd meant well. He was just one of those younger runners who couldn't understand how the old heads felt about steam.

He crawled along on his stomach and finally reached the rear of his tender. Here he held a glove over his nostrils while he sought to go between and break his couplings. He staggered and leaned against the tender, his lungs bursting. He felt giddy and wanted to sit down and go to sleep.

Suddenly he was conscious of light blazing about him. A hand presently was shaking him, pulling him away from the tender and then pushing him back in the direction of his cab.

"Juice!" The voice was shouting. It seemed to Crandall to come from a long way. It seemed, somehow, to belong to George. "I got my juice! Get on an' release your air, Rip! I got my power!"

Crandall was vaguely aware of being boosted up into his cab. He knew that he slumped into his seat and set his air valve at release. He heard the release exhaust.

The frame of his high wheeler suddenly shuddered. His engine moved. There was no sound save the rolling of wheels. There was no loud bellow of power. There was only the steady, quiet surge that you could feel, without fuss or frills, without any thunderous glory.

AND out of the west portal of the big hole the *Aztec* hurled itself in no time at all. The *Aztec* crashed into the teeth of the blizzard. The windows of Crandall's cab slid open to the wind. Crandall put his head out and gulped in the cold, sweet air.

He hung there for a long time before he realized he was standing still, and hands were tugging at him.

"All right, ol' timer?" George was asking. George was standing in the high-wheeler's cab at Crandall's elbow.

"I'm all right," Crandall mumbled. He wouldn't face his big son. He felt as if he wouldn't care to face anybody again.

"You gotta haul me up to Hudson Exchange, Rip," George said. "I can't move a wheel out here. Third rail's buried in ice an' snow. Nothin' like steam for a job in a storm like this, Rip." His hand fell on his father's shoulder.

"Nothin' like steam," Rip mumbled glumly. "Nothin' like it—on the level." He shook his head bitterly. He saw his son climb out quietly, respectfully. Why didn't George gloat over him? Why didn't George bawl out, "What'd I tell you?" No, by hell!

Crandall watched his son mount the electric. Silently, soberly he sanded the snowy rail, eased his throttle open.

A reporter, with snow blowing down his neck, said, "How about it, Mr. Crandall? This new electric power. As an old steam man, your opinion—"

"Electricity," Crandall said. He was trying to think up the answers Mr. Pretty had written down. He could see only the gaseous death in the tunnel and the way George had wheeled them out—not only the train and his own engine, but the three hundred thousand pounds of the high-wheeler's weight too. "This electricity," Crandall said, "she'll do—do things steam won't. I know. She ain't got the fuss, an' not much of the glory, but—"

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"Speak into this, Mr. Crandall," another man said, and Crandall saw a man hanging something from the train shed rafters down over him. Lights blazed. Flash bulbs showered him with white fire.

Mr. Pretty said, "All right, Mr. Crandall. You and George shake hands."

Then they were shaking hands and George was saying nervously, "Well, so-long, Dad. We—we shall all miss you in this farewell to steam, an'—an'—"

"Who's gonna miss who?" Crandall blurted suddenly. He forgot the thing over his head, he forgot the grinding cameras. He knew only that he had reached a great decision. "Nobody's gonna miss me," he snapped. "No longer'n it'll take me to complete the electric trainin' course. You'll see me right here on the *Aztec,* goin' through. You'll see—" He broke off suddenly, filled with a wild panic. This wasn't what Mr. Pretty had written.

The cameras stopped. Mr. Pretty was shaking Crandall's hand. George was holding his arm.

Crandall said, "I'm—sorry. I didn't say what—you wrote. I—"

"You said what I wouldn't have dared to write," Mr. Pretty cut in. "You said what we all hoped you'd say."

Brumbaugh, the train master, came up looking white and sick. He said, "You got to get this varnish moving. You got an audience. They wanna say so-long to steam." He looked like he might have added privately, "An' so do I."

THE END

Legionnaires of Today

IT is as hard to join the Foreign Legion now as it is to escape. Too many adventurers have made the Legion wary of getting a bad name. Once the enlistment bonus was $200—now it is only $40 if you get in at all, and only one out of five does.

After those who pass rigid examinations are fingerprinted, they are given a stern lecture on the rigors of service in Africa. They are sent home to think it over. Generally they come back, of course, and are shipped to Sidi Bel Abbes. Recruits may take any name they want, but must keep it five years. There is no getting out. This rule has made Americans unwelcome; in fact they are not wanted. One deserted and was sentenced to be shot; he called on the American government to save his skin, which was done; but the dignity of the Legion was upset. After a few such cases the door was closed.

Once a pair of German twins served six months in the Legion before it was found that one was a woman. Her brother had passed the physical examination twice.

—*J. W. Holden.*

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Wonders of the World

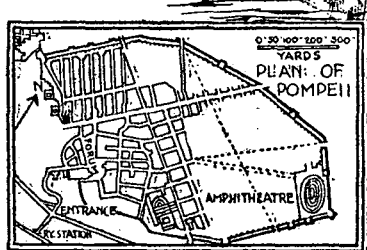
ON November 23, 79 A.D., a terrific eruption of Vesuvius sealed the doom of Pompeii, beautiful city of villas, roses, and wine. Buried suddenly under twenty feet of lava and ashes, Pompeii slept for eighteen centuries in its deep and dark grave. Then in 1748, systematic excavations revealed much of the life of the ancient city. The hardened lava had served as an excellent preservative so that even after many years the city was unearthed almost as it was in its historic days.

The volcano must have given some warning of its eruption, for many citizens fled from the city; yet 2,000 skeletons have been found as they were caught at the moment of death. This leads to the conjecture that thick masses of ashes must have fallen so suddenly as to cover parts of the city instantly. Nevertheless such a harrowing catastrophe preserved for modern eyes the background of life in an ancient Roman city.

POMPEII ~

"The City of the Dead"

A view of Vesuvius, looking through the Triumphal Arch in the Forum at Pompeii, the city it ruined over eighteen centuries ago.



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The Drums Roar

By ROBERT CARSE

LEADING UP TO THIS CONCLUDING INSTALLMENT

WHILE John Monk was on his way to a conference with his employer, Victoriano Londesi, who had just arrived in New York on his yacht, *Nouranhai*, the debonair Monk is accosted by a cab driver and informed that the "Big One" wants to see him. Monk does not see this mysterious representative of foreign interests until after he has visited the Londesis, and gone off with his friend, Tom Devrars, and the native negro, Bouqui, to a Harlem dive to witness an exciting contest between a snake and a mongoose.

When Monk finally meets the "Big One" and learns that an attempt is being made by some unknown foreign interests to incite a native revolution on the islands of the Caribbean, it is decided to enlist the aid of 'Ti Panache, one of the wiser and more capable native Witch Doctors. Through him it is hoped to fight the rising tide of native revolt. Who is behind the insurrection Monk does not know.

On returning to Londesi's apartment, Monk quarrels with Giulia, daughter of Londesi, engages Andrews, the butler, in a

These island natives shrieked in frenzy because their priests vowed that freedom—the greatest dream of all men —was theirs if they revolted

The headlight gleamed in their faces

This story began in the Argosy for March 2

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fight, and learns that Londesi and his accomplice, Kerro Savol, are the prime movers in this West Indian intrigue. Monk, Devrars, and Bouqui leave for St. Von on the ship, *Jupiter*. On their way they sight an airplane overhead, sent out by Londesi, who is headed in the *Nouranhai* toward the Caribbean also. The enemy plane is forced down, and the pilot is rescued and brought aboard the *Jupiter*.

Monk proposes five-card stud to gamble on whether or not the pilot will inform him about the activities of Londesi and Savol. The pilot loses and reveals that the *Nouranhai* is equipped with trick motors and super-chargers; that Savol wants to be emperor of a black empire. The *Jupiter* sails on toward St. Von, where the uprisIng is in progress. The *Nouranhai* arrives in time to augment the shelling of the island by the natives. In the meantime government planes are scouting the sea in search of the *Nouranhai*. Monk and Pilot Goring locate the ship, attack it, make direct hits—but their plane is forced down in the sea. Monk turns the scarf-mounted gun on Savol, and Devrars rescues them and the three survivors hanging on to a lifeboat which put off from the sinking *Nouranhai*.

CHAPTER XI.

SHE SMILED.

IN THE HOURS following that dawn of exposure, John Monk moved rapidly in and around the gutted remains of the plantation buildings at Anse de St. Von, performed certainly several tasks, and when he was through, felt all the varied hitherto inextricably knotted threads of the skein of events in which he was yet only one small part, growing tight, clear and pulsant in his hands. From the upturned and sinking boat Savol and Londesi's plane had left behind in the waters outside the cove, Tom Devrars brought in to the quay the two remaining members of the *Nouranhai's* crew. From the bush and the sides of the winding trail that led only to the highest part of the island and the small valley where for over three generations 'Ti Panache and his disciples of the innermost sect of the *Vaudou* religion had lived and studied wholly undisturbed, a searching party commanded by Bouqui brought back nine or ten other men, rousing them out from where they had flopped in their fear or the exhaustion of their weariness and wounds. They and the men Devrars had salvaged from the sinking boat were all of the same intrinsically savage criminal type: of a half dozen mixed bloods recruited from the riffraff of Havana, Panama and Santo Domingo City, half a dozen other Caribbean ports.

John Monk, Devrars and Bouqui herded them together on the cracked coral of the quay at the cove side. There, with Tom Devrars beside him with Rosemary Canniston, 'Ti Panache and Bouqui, the lieutenant commander in charge of the Navy planes grouped with his officers and men and the three Marine Corps fliers behind, John Monk held an abrupt kind of drumhead court-martial and investigation.

He told the staring men who had taken the pay and orders of Savol and Victoriano Londesi that unless they talked, and talked freely, without lying, they would be lashed one in front of the other, tied to a stake and then in the familiar if very unpleasant Central American and Mexican manner killed by the same burst from a Browning gun.

They gazed, blinking, and licking their puffed lips, at him, at Tom Devrars, the Navy and Marine officers, the slanted, narrowly eager eyes of 'Ti Panache, Bouqui and the other St. Von men. Those that could moved their

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hands, shuffled their feet, then spoke, and what they said was obviously truth.

Both Savol and Victoriano Londesi had been aboard the *Nouranhai* during the last week. They had come aboard her in New York, only a few minutes, John Monk computed, after he had returned to the Londesi apartment and met Giulia and the gun-carrying maid, then Andrews, the boxing butler. The *Nouranhai* had sailed that same night, from a little-used cove on the southern shore of Long Island. Two or three days later, out to sea off the Bermudas it had met the ship which had collected what became most of the *Nouranhai's* fighting crew and the men who later had formed the landing force in the attack here upon St. Von. A day afterward, finding that the wireless message purported to be from the plane which had left the *Nouranhai* to find and sink the *Jupiter* was really a fake, Londesi had sent a coded radio North for another plane.

Giulia Londesi had come in that second plane, the one with the faked Navy markings. She had been aboard the *Nouranhai* since. She was aboard that big, overloaded but still tremendously swift plane that was winging north now for Cuba. For the men whom John Monk, Devrars and the Navy lieutenant-commander cross-examined came in time to admitting that: Cuba was Savol's and Londesi's goal. Cuba, and then Haiti. Because four of the largest and most important islands in all the West Indies were grouped right around it: Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

IT was there in those islands that Londesi held his greatest interests, had made the bulk of his fortune during the years directly preceding and through and after the World War. There he had what amounted to an almost feudal control over the black, semi-literate field hands employed in thousands upon his immense estates. And now, not seeing any chance of further tremendous gain to be made from those holdings in a world of high tariffs and collapsed sugar and fruit prices, he was willing to sacrifice them —for a flat and immediate price already paid or to be paid by Kerro Savol, or the men behind Savol. The vague knowledge among the former members of his crew grouped before John Monk and the other hard-faced men there was that Londesi had sold out his interests and all they might mean to him in the future, if the black revolt were a success through the islands, for several million dollars cash. But what was definite was the fact that Londesi and Savol had been working for months, if not years, among the simple-minded peasant blacks employed throughout all the islands. Obliquely, most slowly, Savol, Londesi and their agents had been fostering and subtly developing a hatred of all whites, and allowing the worst, most rabidly violent and pernicious forms of the various black religions full play among the several hundred thousand blacks connected with Londesi's holdings in the Caribbean.

The revolt had broken there, reacted first and most terribly to the cleverly arranged plans for rebellion from all white dominance and rule. Maddened by unlimited rum, by months of propaganda whose sources they could only trace to the priests of their religions whom they were instinctively given to trust, they were threatening now to drive all of the insular whites into the sea, or simply massacre them if they attempted further defense or occupa-

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tion. And, yet, no forces of white troops had been landed in any quantities to quiet or repel them, no battleships manned with white sailors had appeared to shell them, from long range, back to sanity and away from the hotly gripping madness of the drums, the dancing, screaming witch-doctors with their mouthed promises of safety from white bullets, supplies of rum and food beyond dreams.

The lieutenant-commander leading the Navy plane flight from Puerto Rico confirmed and correlated those facts, amplified them greatly and shrewdly. He had brought military maps and late reports with him, gave them to John Monk, Devrars and the others. The cane and tobacco fields of Cuba flamed nearly from end to end of the island. A number of the big estates and inland towns were already completely deserted by all whites and honestly informed inhabitants. Havana, Santiago de Cuba, Siboney and Mayaguamas were armed camps. The whites in Haiti and the Dominican Republic were gathered in Cape Haitian, Port au Prince and Santo Domingo City. In Puerto Rico, one revolt after another had flared in the interior, raids of drunken, inflamed blacks made on Ponce de Leon, Mayaguez, and even the suburbs of San Juan itself. Jamaica had seen a horde of formerly quiet, orderly field hands go raging from Montego Bay across the interior, pour through Hardware Gap and on, to be stopped only at Spanish Town, right outside Kingston, the capital of Britain's largest possession in the West Indies.

BUT a kind of lull had come upon Jamaica and those other islands in the last twenty-four hours. The throb of madness had subsided a bit from the minds of the stumbling, shrieking, drunken hordes that only the witch-doctors controlled and heavily subsidized by Savol and Londesi could call armies.

Those groups watched Cuba, and the two republics where blacks had fought for and gained their own independence years ago, Haiti and Santo Domingo. They waited for them to act further, to start what some instinct had yet restrained the others from doing—a thorough searching out for death of every man who possessed a white and not a colored or black skin.

"Waitin' for the second half o' the hurric'ne," Tom Devrars had said when the lieutenant-commander had finished giving them the information he held. "Those black fellas from th' hills an' fields an' *fincas* 're brave; they'll fight like hell. But, the rum is wearin' off a little now, an' before they begin stormin' into towns like Siboney an' San Juan an' Kingston they want to know just a little more about what they're fightin' for. Witch-doctors 're all right, an' 'black freedom' is all right, too, but they been fooled a lot before, by witch-doctors like that, an' that talk about 'black freedom' has been kicked around here an' there before, an' nothin' but trouble fer everybody in it has come out. Then, those whites in the towns, an' all th' blacks who're there with 'em and still got their sense, ha' go machine guns an' artillery an' barb-wire. It takes more'n a lot o' rum and witch-doctor rantin' and second-hand rifles to beat them them things, an' those boys on th' loose are gettin' to know it.

"That's why them two lugs—Savol an' Londesi—took all th' time an' trouble t' come here to St. Von; they know there's such a thing as morale in fightin', and especially black morale in a

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scrap like this. 'Ti Panache, here, and the lads who used to work under him, has th' best flock o' *Vaudou* charms an' magic in th' islands. Boys from all over, fr'm the Bahamas t' Guiana, used t' come and buy his *ouanga* an' *garde-corps* charms. *Garde-corps*—get that?" Briefly, Devrars gave his glance to the lieutenant-commander.

"A black boy wearin' a good *garde-corps* charm believes nothin' can kill him, if he listens t' his local witch-doctor an' obeys what he says after. Machine-gunnin' an' shellin' ain't big business to a black bou full o' rum with a gun in his hands an' what he thinks is a real good *garde-corps* aroun' his neck. Black magic, what th' black boys believe t' be honest-to-John stuff, is what Savol an' Londesi come here t' find an' take away with 'em, so's they could finish up an' win. Without, they hurry up a lot, too, they know they can't win. What happened, up there on th' mountain, 'Ti Panache? You're the one fella t' tell us that."

'Ti Panache inclined his head, one hand. He spoke quite shortly, quietly, in his musically pitched, deliberate voice. Yesterday afternoon, late, toward dusk, he had been at the *houmfort,* the sacred temple of the *Vaudou* where he had reigned as chief priest for almost countless years. A number of his disciples and brother priests had been with him, perhaps fifteen, all told. They had been about to begin an evening ceremony; were preparing the altar, the usual offerings to the gods and spirits.

THEN they had heard shots on the trail leading to Anse de Von, and the agonized voice of the old priest stationed there as the customary guard over the entrance to sacred ground. Then twenty-five or thirty men—men like these here, some of them these men—had come out into the valley clearing toward the *houmfort.* They carried guns in their hands. They had been led by a Cuban *nanigo* priest, a man 'Ti Panache knew to be an absolute mercenary and faker, who had lived hitherto only by the blackmail and extortion he had sweated out of the Cuban hill blacks who mistakenly came to him.

One of 'Ti Panache's disciples had cut down the *naningo* priest with a machete when he attempted to enter the door of the *houmfort,* the sacred *Vaudou* temple. But then the men with the Cuban had turned upon 'Ti Panache and his followers, covered them with their guns, threatened to kill them if they moved.

Several of them had tried to move, and had been shot. Several more of the younger priests then had asked the men why they had come there, and were told: the island blacks were no longer going to obey white men's laws and orders, take white pay. The islands were to be rid of the whites, and be the free possession of the blacks. Already it had started, and the whites had fallen back, had run, were leaving the islands. Black would rule black now, and the old, hidden religions the whites had denied would be allowed in the open—a man who was a priest would be a big man, would have great position and wealth, temples more magnificent than the ancient temples in Africa, hundreds of thousands, millions, of disciples and followers. The man who had made that speech was a Cuban, a tall, lemon-colored youth who had worn a bright silk shirt, a checkered cap and heavy pistols. And he had brought forth gold money from his pockets, tossed it glinting over to jounce at the feet of some of the young

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priests, then pointed down to the sea before the cove at Anse de Von and shown them the huge gray steel ship which had come here, he said, from Cuba solely for them to take them and their religious paraphernalia back, and make them their head priests of all *Vaudou*.

As he pronounced those words, 'Ti Panache's voice dropped to a minor register, slacked away. He crouched silently upon his heels, his withered, light-palmed hands crossed laxly over his knees. His eyes studied the ground, lifted, to the sea, the sky, and then one of his hands went to the three sacred *ouanga* charms he wore about his gauntly hollowed neck. Silently, he was talking with his gods, John Monk and Tom Devrars knew. But then he spoke again.

HE had tried to stop them, he said, but two of his young priests had crossed from his side, gone to the line of men led by the young Cuban in the bright shirt, but picking up the gold coins first, and laughing. Then, with the young Cuban, they had started toward the door of the *houmfort* and the sacred relics and charms, the symbols of the dark gods stored within. He, 'Ti Panache, and the other priests had attempted to stop them and at once had been fired upon.

'Ti Panache and another, an old man who later died of his wounds on the trail down to the plantation, had been the only ones to escape. 'Ti Panache had thought of the Commodore and of Rosemary Canniston, the armed and trained force John Monk had formed, but when he reached the plantation buildings shooting was already going on in the dusk, and the cane was being set on fire. He had crawled through the blazing cane and to a back entrance to the house, succeeded somehow in entering. His gods had protected him, 'Ti Panache said, his dark, small eyes contained with a somber, steady light. And those gods would bring no good to the men who had profamed them and the temple, then gone north to Cuba. 'Ti Panache was silent; he seemed to sit utterly motionless, almost, to sleep.

"I don't know how he knows," said John Monk to the Navy and Marine officers. "But he knows, all right. That pair of renegade priests of his he was talking about were in the gang in the boat that transferred from the *Nouranhai* to the plane.

"I saw them when Goring and I crashed; I'm certain they went in Savol's plane, and were carrying a lot of stuff with them—the *garde-corps* business and the rest of it Devrars was speaking about before.

"Now, let's get out of here. Cuba's the place we want to see. 'Ti Panache, here, as you can guess, is absolutely the only man that can stop this thing, instantly, from the inside. I want Miss Canniston to ride with me in the plane that takes me north to Cuba; she knows as much about the islands and this show as anybody. Devrars and 'Ti Panache and Bouqui ought to ride all together in another, and see what they can dope out between them on the way into Havana. That won't overload you too much, will it, commander? The way I see it, we'll have a big need for all these folks up there. Shall we push off?"

"That's it." The lieutenant-commander was pulling his goggles down and his gauntlets up. "Whenever you say, we shove."

John Monk looked at Rosemary Canniston, and then, after a long moment, at Tom Devrars, 'Ti Panache.

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"My grandfather, the Commodore," he said, speaking to the lieutenant-commander, "is buried up there somewhere in the ruins of what was his house—our house. I believe that it would be a waste of very important time now for us to attempt to find his body, give him anything near a fitting burial, if it weren't also practically impossible. But if Lieutenant Leame stays here in charge, I wish that he and the other officers who come to join him will see that it is done. We—I guess we all loved him quite a lot. But yes; we can go now."

It was while they were being ferried out across the sun-flushed loveliness of the cove to the already restively roaring planes that John Monk spoke to Rosemary Canniston, turning to where she sat beside him in the stern-sheets of the riddled boat St. Von men rowed. His voice was very low; the tuning of the planes' motors drowned out his words from all but her. "I guess," he said, "the old gentleman kind of wished to die, right then and there. It seemed like that, somehow."

Her blue, quiet eyes met with his. One of her hands advanced, brushed against and then caught about his wrist. "He saw that you were back," she said.

"To stay," John Monk said; "when this job is done."

"Yes," she said. It was a whisper he did not hear, reading the words from her lips. "But I'm with you now."

CHAPTER XII.

BLACK REVOLT.

IT was dark again when the lieutenant-commander led his flight of planes in perfect banking formation in over the entrance of Havana harbor and the batteries of the Nine Apostles. Searchlights from El Morro and Cabana Fortress cut up at them. Cuban military planes and the planes of several other governments closed right in above them warily, ranging back and forth until they had landed. The sailors who rowed out to meet them at their anchorages were haggard-eyed, jumpy with lack of sleep, wore pistols strapped to their sides, spoke briefly and then only in hoarse monosyllables.

Havana was an armed camp, a city of doubt and almost open dread, John Monk, Rosemary and the others found, coming ashore to the Malecon and driving in military staff cars toward the center of the city. Big patrols of troops were in the streets; barb-wire entanglements were set up around the Parque Central and the Presidential Palace; Obispo Street was heavily shuttered, sand-bagged; only a very few of the big cafés were open or showed many patrons, and those were the officers and soldiers of several nations.

Before the Presidential Palace John Monk waited for a moment, letting the lieutenant-commander, the St. Von men and the various officers go on up the wide marble steps, so that he could stand alone beside the car where Rosemary Canniston sat.

"I had you come along," he said, "because I never want to be separated from you again as long as I live. And for a time, you had to get out of St. Von; you couldn't have stayed there. What you're going to do here—what any of us is going to do here—I don't know. The officers we've talked to already say they haven't found the faintest sign of Savol or Londesi or a plane resembling the one Goring and I battled with. Those two dogs might not

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be in Cuba at all. But we'll probably have to go right on into the interior in a couple of hours to find out, anyhow, and see what we can do. You can't go there; that's no health resort for anybody. The whole place is being gutted apart. The *nanigo* secret societies—the *logias*—have got them all steamed up again. The folks here figure an attack against Siboney and Santiago or this town any time; there aren't half a dozen white men left, outside.

"So all I want you to do now is go over to the Palace Hotel, where they've arranged rooms for us, and call up and order yourself the best dinner frock and all the business to go with it that you can find in the town. Then, when I come to take you to dinner in a couple of hours, you can knock the eyes out of the locally assembled Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, and show the boys that St. Von certainly has something worth stretching the neck for."

But Rosemary Canniston did not smile at him, sat stiffly in the rear of the big machine.

"There's more than that I can do," she said low-voiced. "There must be more. You know that, John."

"We'll talk about it at dinner, then," said John Monk, quickly lifting her hand to kiss it, and then swung, walked swiftly up the concrete driveway toward the staring, alert sentries before the steps.

Inside the palace, during the two and a half hours he, Tom Devrars, 'Ti Panache, Bouqui and a score of officers and various officials spent in conference, he learned, though, little more than he had told Rosemary before he left her. The final crisis of the black revolt was coming upon Cuba, and upon Jamaica, Haiti, and all the other islands; new trouble was also breaking in the French possessions of Martinique and Guadeloupe, even in the distant little Dutch West Indies island of Curacao. He, Devrars and the other men from St. Von had more accurate and direct knowledge, and a better theory for immediate action, than any of the many men with whom they talked.

BLACK revolt was no new thing in Cuba. Sporadic outbreaks had happened all during the Spanish colonial rule, and practically ever since, always finally controlled and quelled, of course, but renewed a few years later, fostered and brought about for the most part by the *logias*, the secretly formed *nanigo* societies who had always schemed against the whites and any class control from above, or below, their own.

Savol and Londesi might be leading the revolt out in the Cuban bush; their spies and agents might be scattered unknown throughout the polyglot population of Havana and the other cities. That, though, argued the officials, had no really great importance now: the harm was already done, the blind hatred raised, and only open force—that of white troops in massed numbers—could stop it.

But, coldly, simply, several times, John Monk reiterated the theory held by himself and Devrars and slow-voiced, quietly moving 'Ti Panache. There was actual head and leadership to the revolt in Cuba and the other islands, and Savol and Londesi or men who took orders directly from that pair led it. Out in the Cuban bush, somewhere between here and Cape Maysi and the Windward Passage to Haiti, must be some man or men, some one group that governed the whole situation, formed its core.

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If that could be found, exposed, and swiftly crushed, peace could be made and sanity brought back like a cool and healing wave. Because the rest of the island hordes, repeated John Monk, had slowed to see what happened in Cuba and Haiti. Those two black republics were only across the narrow Windward Passage from Cuba. The forces behind the Cuban uprising must be the same behind those in Haiti and the Dominican Republic if not all the islands. Tonight he, John Monk, Tom Devrars, 'Ti Panache and Bouqui would go forth into the outer provinces and attempt to find those leaders, stop or kill them. And that, said John Monk, was not entirely impossible. Because the *nanigo* and all the black religions were deeply and importantly involved in this, were the actual mainsprings of the entire uprising and regarded so by Savol and Londesi. Why else the dangerous, reckless expense of time and men to strike south at little St. Von, if not to grasp hold of two of the most occultly informed and powerful *Vandou* doctors in the Caribbean, and attempt to recruit also, or kill, the most famous and powerful of all, 'Ti Panache?

His answer to that was grudging, slow in coming, but finally definite. He and his theory and the three men who supported it with him could have twenty-four hours. After that, white troops, battleships and planes must be used, ruthlessly.

"And then," John Monk told them, rising to go, "when you have the troops of half a dozen nations armed and fighting through these islands, you'll gain the other point Londesi and his pal are after—you'll snap that little peace that is keeping some of the European nations apart, and we'll have international war. All right, gentlemen, and thank you. We'll take our chances and our twenty-four hours. If you want to get in touch with me in the next hour or so, I'll be at dinner in the Palace Hotel. You know—the boy's last night kind of thing. Or, maybe you don't know, even if you do care. Adios!"

HE was in the same bitter, tensely strung-up mood of impending action when he came through the lobby of the big hotel, got into the lift and was taken to the floor where the clerk had told him Rosemary had her room. The door there was shut, but through the light, latticed structure he could hear low, rapid voices, and knocked, called out, giving his name. Rosemary answered him at once, told him to come in, was beside the door when he opened it. But he did not look long at her; he stared across the wide, softly lighted room at the girl standing before the window giving out onto the balcony, gazed, wide-eyed, at Giulia Londesi.

Giulia Londesi spoke. She came forth into the room from where she had been standing against the dark background of the balcony, staring at John Monk.

"Don't have any fear of me, John," she said in a harshly pitched, low voice. "Don't have any fear for her, your Rosemary. I'm—all through with that."

Light from a wall lamp fell upon her face and body as she spoke, and John Monk saw that she was haggard with weariness, the pupils of her magnificent eyes unnaturally distended, her skin and lips given a pallor like that of aged ivory.

She was dressed like a woman of the lower class, in a cheap, faded cotton dress, wore no stockings and coarse

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leather slippers, the native *alpargatas,* carried a tawdry shawl about her shoulders.

Standing there, she stumbled a little bit, as if in complete weariness, and suddenly Rosemary Canniston moved, went to her side, took her by both arms and led her to a divan in a corner. But she looked past Rosemary and at John Monk. "You haven't spoken to me," she said.

A kind of burst of hoarse laughter came from John Monk; involuntarily through his brain had just passed the memory of the circumstances in which he had last seen this girl, and how she had been dressed, how he had been.

Slowly, though, he said, "There are a lot of things I might say, Giulia." One of his hands, the right, was still down against the hip of his stained and torn dungaree trousers, inches from the flat butt of the big automatic holstered there.

"But the best one is to ask you why you're here. You know what that means, I guess," he said.

Her hands lifted gradually, brought back the draggled hair from her brow and cheeks, jerking as they moved "Yes, I know," she said. "That's why I'm here. Listen—do listen to me now, and believe me. You think I share in all that thing with my father, and with Kerro Savol. And I can only tell you that I have, and don't any more. That I only did in part, that they kept most of their real plans always from me, never gave me to understand just how much—horror and awfulness they had designed. I don't think even my father fully knew, or that if he did, Kerro Savol tricked him and forced him by some means of blackmail, led him into such things that no man can contemplate and afterward keep his sanity. Because only today my father tried to get away from Savol and stop this now."

JOHN MONK'S lips were back from his teeth. His vast desire was to laugh, or to curse. He restrained himself from that, he brought his voice forth fairly calmly: "Where are your father and Savol now?"

Giulia Londesi's eyes were fixed upon him in a kind of lock of inner mesmerism, did not flinch or waver from his gaze. "They are not here. If my father did not lie to me when I saw him last, and Savol carried out the plans they had, they're somewhere over toward the East Coast, near Siboney."

"And how did you get here?" said John Monk quietly.

"That would take too much time to tell you now. Except that a ship, a ship unsuspicioned and passed by all the patrols, met that plane from St. Von out to sea, landed us somewhere in Cuba. I came here; my father insisted that I should." Her voice broke; it was only with difficulty that she was keeping herself back from weeping.

"He had begun to see, I guess, what all his plans of wealth and power and Savol's scheming had brought him to. But that is not important—not now. Because their agents and spies are all over the city; every move you have made, practically every word you and anybody with you have said since you have been here, is known. You and Devrars and that witch-doctor and the big black sailor have all been marked down for death. How you got here alive from the palace just now I really do not know. That is why I came here to see her—this girl you do love. You see, I knew they would not touch her because"—her hands jerked and twisted together—"I had promised them I

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would kill her myself. Savol is afraid of any of you; he is aware that you understand the blacks, are known to them, and could control them, calm them if you were only to reach their leaders. So I came, to tell her, tell you, help you finally, all that I could. Do you, do you believe me now?"

John Monk walked to where there was a bottle of whiskey, a siphon of soda and a bowl of ice upon a table. He poured a drink, his own hand shaking slightly, and took it over to her. "You need that," he said. "And it looks like we need you. Yeah, I believe you, all right. There's nothing else that I can do. What do your father and Savol plan to do, though? How much of their plans do you actually know?"

She had gulped the whiskey, sat back now, close to the other girl, some of the rigidity and strained tensity gone out of her body and face. "I know enough to tell you that before tomorrow night they propose to attack all the cities of the island. Tonight, over there toward Siboney, they are holding a huge sort of massed gathering of the blacks.

"The two *Vaudou* priests from St. Von are there, and all the principal leaders of the *logias* and the *nanigo* sects. They will play the drums, and make the old sacrifices to the gods. They will craze and inflame the blacks once more, give them *garde-corps* and *ouanga* charms whose alleged power is so great no white man's bullets can reach or kill the wearers. But you know or have already guessed those things. You were planning to go there tonight, try to reach that place. You couldn't have—not without me. Every road is guarded by patrols of the *logias*. You would've been killed within ten miles of Havana."

She halted, no longer looking at him, turning the empty glass in her hands slowly, looking for a time at the tiled patterns of the floor, then around, at Rosemary Canniston beside her.

Her voice was a husky, dim murmur when she spoke again. "Then," she said, "this girl would lose you forever. As I thought once I lost you. But, I never had you; I never really had you at all. Because, down underneath, you always loved her, and not me. That's—that's tragic, isn't it?" Her hand went out, made a sort of groping, indirect gesture toward John Monk. "For I really wanted you, I'd never known another man like you, although I suspected all the time you loved her and not me, and that I could never make you love me. You hurt my pride and vanity, more than any other thing in my life. And so, for a little, I helped my father and Savol in scheming against you, and now it's ending like this—it's got to end like this. . ."

LOOKING down at them, John Monk was surprised to find that he had slowly been bunching his hands into tightly gripping fists, relaxed the fingers and knuckles stiffly. "How about Savol?" he asked, his voice rasping the words.

Giulia stared up at him. "Savol," she said, as though she had not heard him clearly. "Savol is the man I really hate—as I thought once I should hate you. Savol started all this, and it will only end when he's dead. Savol is the one man at the back of all this madness; he is really mad himself. Because, in this last day, between St. Von and here, my father and I found the fact that we had always missed before—the fact which explains Savol and all he has tried and wanted to do. The man does not know his own parentage, his own blood. He was brought up in a

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foundling home in London, and the only records he could ever discover showed him nothing but that he might possibly somewhere have black blood in his veins. He could not prove that, and he could not disprove it. It is that which makes him insane, for, secretly, all through him, he hates all blacks, and all whites—all the world. In his soul, he cannot call himself anything; he's lost, lost even to himself. . ."

Giulia Londesi got up from where she sat. She moved to the window giving out onto the balcony. She stared at the dimly pale and lovely city and beyond where, against the eastern sky, slim creases of flame from thousands of acres of burning cane and tobacco lit up the sky. Her hands fell against the sides of the tall window, gripped strongly. She seemed, standing so, to be able to hear the drums which roared behind those roaring fields, to see the blacks who danced and shrieked in a frenzy of maddened emotions which their black priests, the priests Savol had paid and tricked in their turn, had told them was the beginning of freedom —the greatest and strangest dream of all men.

She turned around back into the room. She was trembling, shaking throughout all her small body. "Savol," she said in a distinct voice, "told my father and myself that, this afternoon. He said that after he had won here, this—all these islands—would form his empire, and that he would rule it as emperor. He, with me as his wife. . . His empress. . ." Her hands went to her mouth, to hold back the wild bursts of hysterical laughing that gusted up through her lips. Then she caught herself, controlled her body, spoke more calmly:

"Savol was sure then, sure of everything, including me. He had just been talking to his two latest recruits and disciples, the *Vaudou* priests he had brought from your island of St. Von. He knew my father could not leave him, ever, and go back. He believed he knew that I would not—that I would marry him, and that I love him. But, I came to hate him right there and then, and I shall hate him even after he is dead. So, go and get your men, John Monk; get your islanders from St. Von, and we'll go there, and I'll take you right to him—the future emperor of the West Indies. . . But," she had come forward and stood right before him and Rosemary Canniston, "maybe you don't trust me? Maybe you think I'm lying to you now—want only to gull you into a trap of Savol's and my father's making."

John Monk had moved, gone to the phone, picked it up, was speaking into it, telling the military operator at the other end to have Devrars and the two St. Von blacks come here to him at once, but protected by a guard on their way. He looked back and watched Giulia Londesi as he talked into the phone, watched her still when he was finished, spoke to her:

"I trust you, and Tom Devrars and the others will. That's only a small part of the gamble we've got now. But, will you go with us?"

Giulia Londesi smiled at him. "How else are you going to get to where those men are? Thirty or forty thousand armed blacks will be there. You couldn't reach that place in a plane; any plane leaving Havana for the interior is suspected, would be reported at once by telephone, and even then would be unable to find the place where they are gathered. I've got to go with you; I will have to pass you through the *logias* patrols along the roads. I'm known to some of those

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patrol leaders, and I know the secret terms and pass-words they are using . . ." A smile went briefly across her rigored face. "Savol himself taught them to me."

From the divan, Rosemary Canniston had risen up, was walking to stand closely at the other girl's side. "How about your father?" she asked Giulia Londesi. "Have you thought of him, and what will happen to him in this tonight?"

Giulia Londesi moved her pale lips slowly. "My father taught me one thing after my mother died. He told me that the world was a hard and forever unscrupulous place—that no person should think of any other or consider any other. Those are his words. How he has trained me, and used me in this! What will happen to my father tonight or after tonight is only what he has brought upon himself. Give me another drink of whiskey, please, John Monk."

CHAPTER XIII.

BEHIND THE MANHATTAN BAR.

A CUBAN colonel of infantry and eight officers of four other governments brought the trio of St. Von men to the door of the room. John Monk let just one of them, young Goring, enter the room with Devrars, 'Ti Panache and Bouqui, and Goring only after smiling protest. To the Cuban colonel and the others outside, John Monk said, "Sorry, gentlemen, and thank you. But this is all our personal show from now on. See you later—I hope."

Then he locked and bolted that door, closed and bolted the solid inner door after it. Shortly, he presented Goring to Giulia Londesi, then to the whiskey bottle on the table. "One drink," he told the Marine, "and then you get out—unless you propose to go A. W. O. L. and bank your commission and the whole works on the job we're planning to pull tonight."

"I was there at St. Von," Goring reminded him, treating the whiskey lightly. "I came up here to tell you I wanted to make just that gamble. To hell with being A. W. O. L. and a commission, if this thing isn't stopped right away. Go on—let's get rolling!"

"We'll roll far," John Monk told him softly, then crossed to the divan where Giulia Londesi and Rosemary Canniston sat side by side again. "You're the one to tell them," he said to her. "If Tom Devrars and 'Ti Panache don't believe you as I do now, there's just nothing in it. Speak to them; tell them as quickly as you can what you told Rosemary and me."

The three St. Von men stood in a sort of involuntarily formed line, facing her, hard-eyed little Tom Devrars in the center. "I got to tell you," he said gently, "I ain't as nice-minded as John. Lady, if I think you're goin' to up and lie now an' trick us into any more embroidered hell, I'll plug you with as much fun as I'll plug Savol or your old man when I meet up with them. O' course, I don't know why er how you come here yet, an' I think all women 're liars, anyhow, but this here is one time fer you t' tell the truth. . ."

"I will be all alone with you, four or five of you," Giulia Londesi said. "If you find that I am lying, you can kill me first, anyhow. But, I am not lying. I want a car now, the fastest car in this town. I shall get it myself, and tell the men from whom I get it that I am going to my father and Savol. They may doubt that—

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that I would drive across half of Cuba tonight to find my father, but they will get me the car, and they will let me go; they know that Savol plans to make me his empress . . ." Again that wild and bitter little smile flicked to her eyes and mouth. "After I have got it, I will meet you any place you say here in the city, but some place where certainly we will be unseen and unnoticed. But, I am physically incapable of driving that car across the island myself."

"We'll take care of that," John Monk said. "Devrars knows this town as well as any Habanero; he'll fix a place. But, I'll want to have a radio in that car, one we can both send and receive with. Because if you can get us there, I want to call planes after us —thirty, forty, fifty of them—and break this thing forever tonight. A set can be fixed up secretly for Rosemary Canniston right here; I can talk with her in our St. Von code that Savol has been unable to figure out yet, keep in constant touch that way with Havana and all the islands. But all of us St. Von men must be marked and known by Savol's spies, even those patrols out on the road must have accurate descriptions of us. So you'll have to ride in the front of the car, show yourself, pass us through. We'll have to be hidden somehow, in the rear where I can get to the radio controls. And there must be a man to drive."

Absently, Goring had been lighting a cigarette, now watched his match flame lick low towards his fingers before he blew it out. "A guy like me," he said, "a guy named Goring could drive that car. He might as well. I've doubled in brass before, over in Nicaragua, and I've put in a good bit of time right around here; my old man used to be manager of a sugar *ingenio* out near Cienfuegos. A little grease paint, some real *Cubano* clothes, and I'm set. And I can speak the Havana slang and the bush *guajiro* dialect like a real local product; let Tom Devrars tell you . . ." Turning, he flung a sudden, gutturally liquid stream of negroil Spanish upon the little, narrowly staring man.

Tom Devrars smiled briefly, listening. "*Flamenco,*" he said. "You can even do it without gold teeth. You're the guy all right, but, how about the rest of us, when we come up with these gents?"

JOHN MONK let a flat curse word from him. "How do you think Savol and Londesi are mixing with a pack of hay-wire blacks right now, whom they're trying to steam up to kill every man with a white skin they meet? Savol might not be sure of his background, but I'll lay you all I ever owned that he and Londesi are cutting up in full black-face tonight. The crooked priests and the leaders of the *logias* know those two are fair-skinned, but not the mob. We can use a little of that black-face stuff ourselves. That's all I want, that and a rocket to call the planes with, and a gat to carry inside my shirt. . . How soon will you be ready, Giulia?"

"I will meet you in half an hour," said Giulia Londesi in her strangely cadenced and now metallic voice, "wherever you say. But, until then, I must be alone, and I cannot be shadowed or accompanied; nobody can be with me but the men who think I am using all my energies to fight against you. Name the place where I will meet you, and I will be there, with the car."

There was a tourist map of Havana supplied by the hotel management on a corner of the writing desk. Tom Devrars went and picked it up, spread

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it out, Giulia Londesi beside him. He put his blunt thumb down. "There," he said. "Two blocks behind the Manhattan Bar. It's a little side alley, no lights, no people around there tonight. And the only folks who will be there in half an hour 'll be us, Monk, the Marine, me and 'Ti Panache an' Bouqui. But there might be somethin' like a regiment o' cops an' troops solid two blocks out around that place—hid, but there. You know . . ."

"I know," Giulia Londesi said. "But, thank you for telling me. That is all?"

"All," Tom Devrars told her, grinning just a little bit despite himself, watching as she walked across the room to where Rosemary Canniston sat quietly in the corner of the divan, stood before her. For a full moment, they rested so, levelly staring at each other. Then Rosemary rose up and gave her hand to the other girl. "I wish you all the luck," she said to Giulia Londesi. "Because tonight you'll need it. I only wish I could go with you. But," her eyes swung in a quick, oblique glance to the faces of John Monk and Devrars, "my job is all right here, I guess . . . Goodnight."

"Yes," Giulia Londesi said, still watching the other girl's eyes, "we'll all need all the luck tonight. But, I'll see that he gets back—back to you." Then, running with small steps, she was at the door where Bouqui stood guard and had already pulled the bolts, was through and gone.

IN that room a silence held for a period of several minutes, and Tom Devrars was the one to break it. "Some folks sure start playin' their cards at th' wrong time," he said. "But that kid sure plays 'em well. If she's on th' crooked now . . ."

Goring was lighting another cigarette, studying absently the flaming of another match. "You couldn't have been within miles of the *Maine,* then," he said. "And it sure looks like she's got all the goods for us."

John Monk had gone to sit beside Rosemary, was talking with her swiftly, looked up as Goring spoke. "All right," he told the Marine, "you and Tom Devrars hop to it and get a flock of military maps out of the assembled officers cluttering up the lobby down there. Grab off the highest ranking Cuban officer you see and tell him we want the finest small sending and receiving set he can lay his hands on—tell him the size and specifications, but nothing about why—and then to jump another set up in here for this girl. She'll handle all our stuff right from here, plot our course out and keep us in touch with all the planes out at Columbia Field. Then make low, whispering noises somewhere, Tom, and get the grease-paint and *Cubano* clothing Goring was talking about before. You fix that, and we only got a half an hour . . ."

He was sitting there still by Rosemary's side, in the partly darkened room, when from the hall beyond where they had been silently waiting, Bouqui and 'Ti Panache knocked on the door, and Bouqui stuck his long, conical skull in. "They mon ready," he said. "They down hall here now, say come along. They look like coupla boys come right in outa *zafra,* cane juice on they pants. Goodbye, Missy Rosemary; don't you think we don't take good ca'e o' Mista Monk fo' you."

"I know you, Bouqui," she said. "And I know him. So I know you'll be all right . . . Good-bye." Then she swung right into John Monk's arms,

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close up against him, her arms linked tightly behind his neck. "Maybe I've been frightened too long," she told him. "Anyhow, I'm not frightened now. I'll just do my job here, and you do yours out there. I'll—I'll be able to talk to you by radio, anyway."

"In less than half an hour," John Monk said. "It won't take them that to set up here for you, and for us to get my stuff going in the car and out of town. After that—"

"After that," she was drawing down his head to kiss him, "St. Von, and peace. Peace, for you and me, and all the islanders . . . Good-bye, John Monk."

John Monk was not fully certain or conscious then why he did it, but as he stepped backwards to the door and away from her, he lifted his hand stiffly and saluted her, as he would a soldier, a brother officer. And she, standing grave-eyed there, smiled back at him.

CHAPTER XIV.

PHIAL OF POISON.

THE car Giulia Londesi produced for them as the first concrete sign of her new alliance and trust was a long, low sedan of a foreign manufacturer, darkly colored and extremely powerful. In the lightless, odorless little pocket of the alley behind Mayor Gorgas Street, John Monk found it and her when he came rapidly there, slipping in through the cleverly deployed and hidden cordon of police and soldiers all about the place. He and Tom Devrars and the lanky Marine, Goring, were dressed in the tattered jean pants and shirts of Cuban field peasants, walked shoeless, every bit of bare skin carefully, smoothly darkened with grease-paint. Giulia Londesi was seated in the front of the big machine, silent, seeming very calm now, a United States Navy radio officer working behind her where, under the rear seat, he was finishing the installation of the short-wave set and antenna that they would use half way across Cuba.

The Navy officer was through, stood down from the car. He was not a particularly young man, and it had been necessary for him before he came here also to bedizen himself as a Cuban of dark blood, bare his feet and wear torn cotton pants. "You're all set," he snapped in a hoarse whisper at John Monk, peering at him fixedly first to make sure of his identity. "You can pick up the South Pole with that, and talk to Paris. But you'll have to lie flat on your stomach to get the headphones on and reach the controls."

"That's all right," John Monk said. "We'll have to lie flat anyhow. Four of us will be doing that. The young lady and your disguised Marine there will be the only ones to have the pleasures of sitting upright and viewing the countryside."

The Navy man nodded and, in full character, blew his nose with his thumb and forefinger. "Have a nice time," he said. "I'll be over with that other girl, and if anything goes wrong, I'll know it."

"So'll we," muttered Tom Devrars. "You shuffle along an' tell them cops we're comin' through now. Thanks, fer this."

Little, bent-framed 'Ti Panache and Bouqui had already mounted up into the rear of the car, arranged themselves as compactly and comfortably as possible on the floor-boards, but with their automatic pistols drawn from their shirts and held in their hands. Tom Devrars filled his jaw with another chew of Copenhagen snuff,

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looked once more up and down the alley, then climbed in to join them, cursing mechanically in a whisper and telling 'Ti Panache shortly in the creole patios that the old times had never been like this.

John Monk stood in the velvet-like darkness of the alleyway yet, forward by the front seat where Goring had taken the driver's position and was turning the motor gently over, Giulia Londesi on his other side. "You're set?" John Monk asked them.

"Ask the lady," said Goring, nudging his pistol butt around in his sagging shirt to be closer to his hand.

"Yes," said Giulia Londesi in a very low voice. "Outside town, we head straight East. One of the *logias* patrols will be sure to stop us. If we get by the first of them, we will be put on the road to the place we want. If we don't—"

"—We'll try shooting our way through, and go on anyhow," finished John Monk. "I've got a signal rocket here stuck down inside the back of my shirt. And, if the radio in the back holds up all right, we'll have all the planes at Columbia Field out after us in ten minutes; a lot of those new jobs can do close to two hundred miles an honr . . ." Past Goring's brightly capped head, he stared for an instant at Giula Londesi. "Do you want a gun," he asked her, "just in the case things shouldn't go so well?"

"I'VE got a little phial of poison," she said very calmly, slowly. "I had it with me when I went to the hotel to see you and Rosemary."

"I guess," said John Monk after a moment of absolute silence, "you know us better now . . . All right, Marine; as soon as I get aboard and shut that door, roll 'em over."

It was, muttered Tom Devrars once after they had been halted and passed by the first heavily armed patrol of blacks, like paying to see the dancing lady at the side-show, and then being shown the bearded man: you never saw what you wanted, and you didn't know what you were going to get next. That patrol of blacks had stepped with complete abruptness right into the roadway and into the flanged swing of Goring's headlight beams not more than eight miles outside of the last regular suburbs of Havana. Even if the Marine had maintained his high rate of speed, kept right on going and attempted to mow through them, they would have raked and stopped the car with the high calibre rifles and submachine guns. The headlight gleamed in their faces.

And when Goring had whacked the brakes on, skidded to a stop, they had milled immediately around the machine, yelled hoarsely out and jammed their gun muzzles up against Giulia Londesi and the Marine. The rear doors John Monk had locked before the car had pulled out from the alley behind Mayor Gorgas Street, and Goring drove with no lights on his dash. But men of the patrol had ripped at the handles, started to raise their gun butts to smash the glass or the doors in, until Giulia Londesi, cursing in excellent Spanish, got out from the front seat, walked forward to the fancily dressed and half-drunken leader, slapped him flatly in the face.

They dropped back from the car then. They gazed at their leader, slowly thumbing the hammer of his Luger pistol, and they crowded closer to stare at this lovely, small and white woman who was the first person in their knowledge to have ever slapped their leader's face. The leader's pistol

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muzzle came up, part way down, then dropped to his side. "*Si,*" he said, speaking thickly, hoarsely as her words penetrated through the clouding of the rum and rage in his brain. "*Si, senorita;* I know you now . . . I was there when you landed, yesterday, in the plane. But—"

"You would have me hit you again?" said Giulia Londesi. "Or take your own gun and kill you? Answer me! Where are they? My father, and the other man, *El Cacicque,* Savol? You ask me the pass-word—and I give it to you. Domballa—Domballa, the snake god, the god of war. Now, where are they?"

"Yohabos," the leader mumbled. "At Yohabos, *senorita.* That is all I know. But, you will meet other patrols, and they'll tell you, guide you there . . . You can go now, *senorita;* certainly, you can go. . ."

"*Bueno,*" Giulia Londesi had said, turned and begun to move back toward the running board where Goring held the front door open. But the leader shuffled after her, his big, protuberant lips moving. "Next time, *Senorita,*" he began in a heavy voice, "next time—"

GIULIA LONDESI swore at him. She raised her hand as though to strike him again. "There will be no 'next time,' you mule-headed *tonto!* This all ends, with tonight. You will know me though, when you see me next, no?" Then she was in the car, the door swung banging shut, Goring ramming from a flat start right into second gear, and in the road behind the patrol leader and his men stood blinking, open-mouthed, their guns low at their sides . . .

At the next two patrol bivouacs they had not been stopped at all, except to slow up for a moment with the car still in gear and motion as Giulia leaned out to give the pass-word and wave back, toward the position of the first and most important guard position. At the fourth, though, it had been different. There they found a barrier of three old, solid-wheeled carts drawn up across the road, a machine-gun topping it. The leader of that patrol was a city man, wore a formal straw hat of American make, yellow shoes, and a vest under his crossed ammunition bandoliers. He permitted Giulia Londesi to get out of the car and talk to him; he listened in silence to her and Goring. Then he tried one of the car's back doors, and when he found it locked, clambered up into the front seat the girl had quitted. He held a .45 pistol in each hand, was poking the muzzles down towards the motionlessly tense bodies of the four men jammed there, when Goring spoke to him again, this time in a delicately adjusted whisper.

"You might shoot off those cannons of yours, *chico,*" Goring told him, his left hand down inside his shirt and bringing the muzzle of his own .45 hard against the *logia* leader's side ribs. "But if you did, I'd blow a hole in you so big they could hide your grandmother there. *Comprendo?* Turn around! Sit down! Drop your guns on the floor—both at the same time. Make room for the young lady to come in and sit beside you. That's the boy . . . Now tell the young lady to get back in the car . . . Tell her! Now tell your pals you're going along with us, all the way to Yohabos and the big show. Tell that guy at the machine-gun he's in charge, and to haul that cart back, let us by. Fine; you aren't as stupid as you look, *amigo* . . ."

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From then on, their progress was like something out of a wild but triumphant dream. Goring hammered the car at a speed that was consistently above an average of fifty-five miles an hour, including the moments he chose to slow down going through certain little clusters of thatched-and-mud *bohio* villages where, once or twice, they heard drums playing and emotion-cracked voices shrieking, were waved at and on by the small patrols. The man they had recruited rested silently most of the time, slumped down between Goring and Giulia Londesi, but with his eyes alert, and unconsciously jerking his head around once when he heard the creaked chatter of the radio as John Monk tuned in. But the car no longer followed the main road, whanged jolting over the deep ruts of country lanes that climbed through sharply rising hills where dark clumps of pine trees grew.

ALONG that trail, many men had passed recently. The flaring of the headlights picked up fresh, widely trampled footsteps in the mud, a litter of cigarette butts, banana and fruit peels, an empty rum jug and a broken-bladed machete that had been cast carelessly aside. "Gettin' there," Tom Devrars said. He crouched half upright now, resting himself and allowing John Monk more room in which to work, 'Ti Panache and Bouqui space also in which to stretch themselves and lift their weapons. "Yohabos ain't far from here, from that last *barrio*. This up ahead is one o' the biggest pine woods on the island, and a real wild, lonely place. It was used a lot before as a secret meetin' place, in the old slave days. Savol knows his Cuba, don't he, *primo?*" With his broad thumb, Devrars jabbed the former patrol leader a savage blow in the shoulder.

The man jerked around and stared at him, his teeth showing, but silent yet, able to control himself. "Pipe up!" Devrars commanded him. "You savvy English. You been flappin' your ears wide t' hear all we been sayin' since you come aboard . . . You must ha' been in the *Nouranhai* one time er another, an' there must be a gang o' your pals right up ahead . . ."

The man between Goring and Giulia Londesi made two very quick motions then; from inside the loose sleeve of his shirt he brought a knife out, and whipped it back at Tom Dervars' throat. At the same time, he flung his whole body sidewise, up and over toward Goring, hammering the Marine in the face and eyes with his thrashing knees, kicking at the driving wheel.

The knife drew blood as it creased Tom Devrars' shoulder, and as Devrars fired a shot cleanly between the eyes of the man who faced him and had thrown it. Big Bouqui was butting into him when he fired the shot that saved his life, and almost destroyed his aim, but the bosum of the *Jupiter* had lunged forward in a kind of tackling movement over the seat back, clamped his immense arms about the knife-thrower's legs and feet, ripped them away from their lock about Goring's head and the driving wheel, allowed that man to slither the bucking car up from the ditch and onto the road again.

"You get him?" asked John Monk. "Because if any more guys walk on the small of my back, this radio gag will have to stop. I'm kick-goofy right now."

"No more," Devrars answered him. Bouqui was lowering one of the windows, and Goring had slowed the car.

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Smoothly in unison, Devrars and 'Ti Panache were hurling the limp body clear of the car and the roadway, crashing deep into scrub brush and darkness. Then, immediately it seemed, they heard many other sounds.

IT was as though, winding up this last rise and through the deep kind of cut the old trail had worn through the hillside, the car had rent back a wall of silence. Drums, many drums, hundreds of them, were being palmed and hammered, brought to screaming, whimpering staccatos only several hundred yards ahead. Thousands of men were about those drummers, for slanting through the drums' roar was the cadenced, chorused yet somehow insanely pitched singing of voices. Through that, too, was the rattling of the gourds of the *diablito* dancers, the keened, yammering shrill of *lambis,* the Haitian bush conch-shell horn.

Goring flipped a finger forward, snapped the lights fom the car, cut the motor to silence. In the car, immobile, involuntarily fascinated, they stared at each other, the drums, the *lambi* wailing and the savagely magnificent singing striking over them like the down-falling holocaust of an immense and terrific typhoon. John Monk and Long Tom Devrars moved in the same moment, and John Monk brought his voice loud enough for the others to hear him:

"This cut in the hill acts like a sound-box. The wind's just changed, and poured all that stuff this way. It seems a whole lot nearer than it is; it can't be less than a mile or two miles from here yet. Because we haven't met one sentry . . . All right; it's what we want. Wait a minute, Goring; give me one more crack at the radio while I talk back and tell that kid in Havana just where we are, and to shoot the planes out from Columbia. Then you dump the car down off the road and into that ravine. We won't need it, or the radio from now on in. What we'll need now is miracles—and 'Ti Panache."

CHAPTER XV.

SMASHED DRUMS.

HE crouched down, pulled his head-phones into place, turned dials over, found the little sending key in the darkness, rapped his call number out, once, twice, then Rosemary swiftly was talking back, telling him to speak. Strangely, he was smiling as he whipped the words at her across space:

"This is it. Whole business right ahead. Call planes. Approximately ten miles due North by East of Yohabos. Planes to keep at least a two thousand foot ceiling until rocket, and then dump everything. Don't you dare come with them. But would you like a wedding in a church? If you can see Tom Devrars in a church as my best man. Shoving off now, and then for you. Love."

He listened for a moment, though, after the had signed off, and through the exterior noise all about him heard the clear, rapid crackling of her message back. "Fine. Everything is fine if you love me. Devrars refuses being best man at his own peril. Will fix it to have breakfast with you today."

Slowly, before he followed the others from the car, John Monk let the head-phones slide back. He could tell himself now, he thought, that he had been grinning when he had said those gay words to her, and that he had

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imagined she had been grinning as she answered him. They had talked to each other almost like a couple of kids sitting side by side in the sunlight of the schoolhouse wall. While beyond the top of that rise there, perhaps no more than two hundred yards away at best, rested anywhere between twenty and forty thousand men, armed, viciously inflamed, careless of everything including their own lives, but eager, far more eager than anything else, for his own life, and that of Tom Devrar's her own, Rosemary Canniston's . . . And here with him he had four men and a pitifully brave and emotionally lost girl, their sole armament seven or eight automatic pistols, their one hope of victory and life itself based upon the imponderable factor of the arrival of some planes from a field over a hundred miles away, before, or after, 'Ti Panache could attempt to hold that black horde with the uncounted power of his personal magic.

But, in the mud and mist-splotched darkness of the trail, those people who had cast their hopes and their lives upon the same gamble as his own stood quietly grouped together, inspecting their weapons, gauging with silent grins the effectiveness now of the theatrical grease paint make-ups Devrars and Goring wore. They gazed critically at his own as he advanced to join them, then turned to watch 'Ti Panache, with a few quick, deft motions of his gnarled hands and a little mud from the trail, change the entire appearance of Giulia Londesi, make her seem a ragged, slattern peasant woman of the cane-brakes and the hills. Then, strangely, 'Ti Panache brought his gaze from the girl and to him, John Monk.

"You have been afraid of that, ahead?" he asked in the island creole. "You have just thought that we will only to our deaths? You do not trust me, and the powers I have given you to understand the gods put in my hands?"

"You speak truth," said John Monk simply. He stared sidewise; Goring was leaving the group, returning to the car, to start it on its sharp descent down into the deep ravine beside the trail.

"You want to stop him, then?" asked 'Ti Panache. "There is still time to turn back, and get out of here. Even Bouqui, I think, who is my blood relation, would go back, if you went now. Tell me what your heart and what your mind say, both, John Monk."

"They say go on," John Monk said. "They say go on, and get this over with, one way or another, right now, here, tonight."

"That is well," 'Ti Panache had made a motion toward the ragged notch in the hillside above from where the maniacal clamoring of sounds poured. "Those up there have need of us now, and not of that man, Savol. I must talk to them, and take them back to their old, true African gods. You and these people can help me get there. We will go now?"

"Now," said John Monk, watching Goring leap back from the rolling car, the car lift bumping up, then pitch crashing over and down. "Devrars will stay at your side. Bouqui with me, the girl and the tall man. You have your gun?"

IN the drum-crashed darkness, 'Ti Panache seemed to smile. "I have several things," he said. "What the gods have told me is enough . . ." He reached up, the palm of one of hi

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hands touched John Monk's shoulder slightly, and he turned, walked easily, silently through the mud already trampled by thousands of bare feet toward the crest of the hill beyond.

John Monk followed him for a pace or so, then stopped, where the others stood with Goring now. "If we're going," he said to them, "we go now. You, Tom, with Panache. Bouqui and the others with me. We'll try to stick as close to you as we can."

Long Tom Devrars stared up the trail for an instant. "That won't be so hard," he muttered harshly. "Drummin' like that makes a black boy wild for blood, but it makes him careless, kinda, too. Savol—Savol's the guy to watch for. See yuh up there. *Hasta la vista . . .*"

They met more than several scores of blacks just as they came to the final crest of the steep hill. But they were as Tom Devrars had described them; drunken with rum, hours of the drums and dancing, staggered and waved wildly, fingering their guns and machetes in numb hands. One or two of them, seeing Devrars and 'Ti Panache striding side by side, yowled out at them in Cuban and Haitian *patois,* and Devrars yelled back, waved his hands also about his head, his words a jumble no one heard. But some of those men, lurching on, caught sight vaguely of Giulia Londesi where she strode between Goring and John Monk, Bouqui a pace ahead; then came over, attempted to stop the group.

Bouqui made a low laughing sound, dropped back into the center of the trail. He spoke to the other black men in their own dialect, suddenly licked out a hand for the nearest one, hefted him right off his feet and then slapped him unconscious with two open-handed blows, heaved him head over heels off into the mud. "You don't know a real priestess of the *nanigo* when you see her?" he asked them easily. "Get on along, you *bohio* pigs—before more of you must learn . . ."

He laughed once more, watching as they shuffled aside and stumblingly ran. Then at a trot he was forward to where John Monk had led the way from the trail itself, climbing up, the others at his back, to the raggedly bush-clad backbone of the ridge through scrub pine trees that stood dimly out against the first dim graying of the Eastern sky.

He, the girl and Goring had knelt, gone prone there, when Bouqui rejoined them, and he looked up at the big black, then silently pointed out and down. The ridge where they lay and a ridge perhaps a mile or so distant formed a huge kind of shallow amphitheatre in the hills. Scrub, pinon, brush and boulders clogged the trail beyond this ridge, and a good part of the valley beyond. It was in the further half and end that the horde was gathered. Under their feet, in their advance towards the drums and the sacrificial altars of the priests, those men had torn and crushed the foliage and the grass like a ponderous herd of animals.

BUT now they joined shoulder to shoulder and tightly, in an immense, concentrically arranged ragged kind of ring. Between the walls of swaying, writhing, drum-controlled bodies they so formed, the drummers knelt and crouched, beating, hammering wild-eyed, then the *diablito* dancers and the *nanigo* sects and the real *Vaudou,* paralytically jouncing and stiff in their violent, shaking series of steps, and, innermost, central, the rough, stone-built altar and the priests.

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John Monk caught the girl beside him staring there, at that space which held the white-robed priests and the high main altar with its weird jumble of snake and Christian cross images, bottles of perfumes and liquors, heaps of maize and various other foods and delicacies as offerings to the gods. "No man with a white skin is there," John Monk whispered to her. "At least no man that shows his white skin now . . . I think Savol is that tall man, though, wearing the garments of a Haitian *hougan* priest. Do you want to stay here, with Goring?"

She gazed at him, her eyes contracted, her voice a rushed, harsh whisper.

"'Ti Panache and Devrars have gone on. We've all got to, if this is going to be finished . . . No, I brought you here—to finish this for all of us."

John Monk raised, got to his feet, and she was up beside him, Goring and Bouqui with her as he started on down the bouldered slope. Men who seemed to be drowned and dead, worn to an utter stupefaction of nerves and sensibilities, lay littered at the bottom of that slope, mouths open, hands relaxed about their weapons and the clumsy jugs of palm rum. "Too much for 'em," whispered John Monk to Goring, his hand down upon the pistol inside his trousers waistband. "Too much for me if I hang around here like this much longer. But, walk on 'em, kick 'em aside; there's about twenty thousand more conscious ones up ahead we've got to get through." He swung his head. "'Ti Panache and Devrars are in there now. And we've got to be close to them when Panache breaks his stuff."

"Has he got it, okay?" Goring asked, his face calm.

"Watch him," John Monk told him. "And watch the sky. Those planes should be over any minute now . . ."

But it was impossible for any of them to see further the small, bowed, fragile form of 'Ti Panache or that of Tom Devrars at his side, and it was equally impossible to watch the sky. What went on about them engrossed and held them completely. Black men of a score of African tribes and a countless mixture of bloods were around them on all sides now; they swayed as the trees of a gigantic forest might sway in the thrusting of an eerily pulsant gale. They sang, swaying to the time of their singing, their faces blankly contorted masks, their distended eyes focussed and insanely alight with the awful hypnotic power of what went on before them at the principal altar. Continually they sang.

It was an ancient, dreaded song of black freedom, the song that had been sung in Haiti over a hundred years ago when they charged the guns of Napoleon's finest troops, slaughtered them, driving them and all white men from the island. It seemed to be a part of them, spring fully echoing now from their blood and brains, be contained in the beating of the drums, the white-robed and moaningly praying priests who stood before the altar and gave the sacred sacrifice of the blood to D'Ambala and to Legba, the black gods of hatred and of war. It came from them in a trembling, rocking, throated thunder of sound beneath which the drums unceasingly boomed. *"We promise to destroy the whites and all they possess. We shall die to keep our promise . . ."*

THE black, sweating, semi-nude figures swayed, swung, swayed back again. The staring eyes saw nothing but the priests holding

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high the bowls of hot blood. The bodies answered only to the drums and to the singing, their hypnotism complete. John Monk fronting her, the other two tall men on each side, Giulia Londesi went quite easily forward, stumbling a little, but with haste, and held up by the strong hands of Goring and Bouqui, her eyes fixed on John Monk's broad back.

Then, suddenly, John Monk stopped, and stepped a little aside, and past him, fifty feet away, she saw the altar and the group of men who stood there, was dimly aware that Devrars was at her other shoulder in the front rank of the mass. But the drumming, the awful singing, were slowing, passing like the retreat of a hurricane. And she recognized among those men before the stick and pebble and snake gods of the altar three men, her father, then Kerro Savol, then 'Ti Panache. 'Ti Panache was still in movement over the trampled turf towards the group fronting the altar, and the men there were facing him, their motions and their voices arrested.

Her father and Kerro Savol wore the loose white, cabalistic robes of the priests who served the dark gods. Their skins were blackened; they gave the absolute appearance of black men and priests. But they were falling back among the others, the real *nanigo* and *vaudou* priests, her father first, then Savol. A whisper was going through the group, through the multitude. Then it passed, and a silence came, a silence more awful than the singing and the drumming. Kerro Savol's voice was pitched on a high note as he started to speak, his big hands shoving at the shoulders of two of the young priests before him. His voice broke; he was silent.

'Ti Panache was speaking. He was talking to the two young priests, his voice low, soft, and yet clear, deliberately powerful. He talked in the ancient, strange patois employed only by the priests, using many African words. Giulia Londesi could not understand him, was vaguely aware that almost all those around her did not. But she could see the small old man's hands lift tensely, sharply out, to the symbols and the offerings of the gods represented there. She could see the faces and the eyes of the two young priests, the men, she knew, who had been his priests and disciples upon St. Von, come here with her father and Kerro Savol.

The two priests were trying to speak, trying to move, and could not, stood wordless and still in the lock of 'Ti Panache's gaze and words.

The old man spoke more loudly, now in the common *guajiro* dialect of Cuba which every man there could understand. His words rose and clashed across the silence clearly, rose again and again:

"Why do you fear me? Why do you fail to speak? You have sung of blood and of freedom. You have just made the blood sacrifices to the gods. The gods our people have held sacred from the white men from the beginning of the world. Yet you have white men with you, here, before this altar. White men in the robes of priests. White men who have killed many blacks and defiled already the most holy of all black altars . . . Stand back! Stand from me!"

BUT the two before him stood immobile, controlled by a fear that gripped their throats and seemed to vise their breathing back into suffocation. 'Ti Panache looked past them; he stared into the eyes of Kerro Savol

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and of Victoriano Londesi, watching Savol's hand go down towards the gun he carried inside his *houga's* robes. 'Ti Panache lifted his head up until his eyes were high above the altar. His laughter was as flat and startling as a shot, echoed quickly and was gone into the silence he let fall upon it. "The white men behind you," he said, as though he talked still to the two young priests, "are afraid. They are armed — here, before the altar, dressed in holy robes—they are armed. But D'Ambala watches them; Legba, Maitresse Erzulie. I watch them . . . And I have asked you to stand back!"

Up from his sides, 'Ti Panache stretched out his hands, his right, then his left. Very lightly his extended, stiffened fingertips just touched the shoulders of the young priests, then fell to his sides again. Now he stood utterly still, and staring. The two priests were gazing with eyes that were bright with insane fear at the shoulders of their robes where he had touched them so lightly. One of them cried out first, understanding, and seeing the black point of the thorn which had been beneath 'Ti Panache's fingernail, feeling in his veins the poison upon the keen, fine head of the thorn in his flesh. His fingers dug at the white material and the end of the thorn which he knew now 'Ti Panache had dipped in the poison taken from the ducts of the utterly deadly *fer-de-lance*.

He fumbled as he reached, he gaped at 'Ti Panache and that man's blunt, flat nails which somehow had carried their load of death unharmed. He cried out again, screaming, feeling the body of his companion priest lurch dully against him.

Then his knees gave, bowed, he pitched sidewise, around, flat on his face in death, his last gesture a clawing motion of supplication out towards 'Ti Panache.

'Ti Panache moved past him. He thrust his body aside with his foot. He stood watching the other priest who had been unfaithful to his gods stagger, scream out and pitch down, then he spoke, facing the altar and the men before him still, but his words for the horde behind:

"You have called out to the gods. I am the gods' true servant. You have asked for wrath. You have seen wrath strike; D'Ambala has answered. I carry his message . . ."

'Ti Panache's hands had gone again to his sides, then, with a swiftness that was like the passing of light, he reached forward and in, towards Victoriano Londesi. The man tried to duck from him, squirm back, aside. But with the bare, hard butt of the palm of his hand, 'Ti Panache struck him a glancing blow along the cheek. 'Ti Panache's hand dropped back, he stood a bit aside. The sigh which rose from the horde was like the gusting of a vast wind; white skin in a glaring strip showed where 'Ti Panache's hand had passed, swabbing off the carefully layered facial paint.

'Ti Panache turned half way, so he faced somewhat the black ring of straining bodies and faces. "I have told you," he said to them. "And those are the men who would lead you, would have you defile your gods, and draw death upon you—death even from the sky."

His hands went high, closely together, speared sharply towards the sky. He seemed then, face, body, arms uplifted, to be one with the sky and all the elements, to possess the power to bring the sky crashing in all unknown horror down upon them. They

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gazed up, their lips parted, but even their breathing stilled.

PLANES roared along the dawn sky, planes that were like motes in the rays of the sun, then, mysteriously swift and vast, right above their heads, blotting away the sunlight in their immensity and number, the beating of the motors seeming to hammer back and out the beating of the hearts of those who craned up, gasping. 'Ti Panache let his hands drop. His voice clarioned. "You have asked for wrath! You have begun to make sacrifice! Here is sacrifice! It is they who have betrayed you, and for themselves alone!"

His hands and his body swung. He was pointing at Victoriano Londesi and Savol. Under the robes he wore, Savol had found the gun he carried at his waist, but the priests about him were very close, stood tightly against him, and at his shoulder, trembling with an ague of emotion that was forever beyond control, Victoriano Londesi had also found and grasped a hidden pistol, brought the muzzle in against his, Savol's, side.

But then Savol must have seen Londesi's eyes, heard his muttered, incoherent rush of words, and the muffled shock of the shot as that man brought his pistol around against his own breast, held the trigger back even as he sagged down to his knees and face. For Savol kicked and smashed at the priests about him, flung them back with his insanely powerful arms, leapt at 'Ti Panache, over the bodies of the two priests.

It was Bouqui who met him, Bouqui who killed him. As though in one long and certain stride, Bouqui was there from the front rank of the mass, his giant's shoulders struck Savol's knees. His body straightened, flung Savol's thashing body headlong. He followed after it. He met Savol as the other came up from his knees and tried again to fire the pistol he held in his hand. Bouqui kicked him full in the face. He broke the frontal bones as he would break a calabash gourd; he stamped upon and smashed the pistol hand and wrist as he would stamp out a jungle snake. He lifted Savol up, let him stand alone. He asked the man to try to strike him or to turn and run. Savol, his smashed, sightless face bowed forward, started to move his feet and good hand. Bouqui caught him by the throat and arms, lifted him and hurled him, watched as the semi-conscious body struck the ground and the spine snapped under the shock and the life went swiftly. He walked forward then. He turned the body over, lifted it, held it high above his head.

"It is the end!" His voice was a roar that clanged throughout the valley. "It is the end! You hear me? Go back—go back to your work, to peace! And tell all them, the others, of what you have seen here! Wait—wait! Take this!"

He whirled in what was like a majestic, solemn dance step. His tightened arms bent, straightened, and when his hands lowered they were empty and where the mass stormed about the body was a whirlpool of frantic, final motion and sound.

HE turned from watching that to see John Monk, Devrars, Goring and 'Ti Panache up against the wide structure of the altar, the girl among them, a score of the *nanigo* priests and *logias* leaders in front of them, facing the muzzles of the pistols the St. Von men and the Marines held. Bouqui smiled, and made a sign

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to his great-uncle, 'Ti Panache; it was a gesture of absolute deference, understanding and calmness. Bouqui turned, his hands stretched in command, his voice booming at the mass.

The ranks were broken, loosened now, reeling back in a kind of weirdly silent retreat which had followed upon the last words he had said to them. But they halted where they slowly and clumsily moved in a slack kind of exhaustion of every motion, and stood silent, waiting for him to speak.

"It is from St. Von we come," he told them, his voice holding the throbbed notes of a cymbal. "You know St. Von. You know *Le Roi de Couleuvre,* 'Ti Panache. You have just seen him here, answering the true gods for you. He has brought white men with him, St. Von men. It is they who have brought those planes in the sky. The planes who would have killed you like bees under a stone if he had not stopped them. Go to your homes now; go to your women and your real priests and your work. Go as I have told you, to your peace. But do not forget your true gods, and do not forget this day, and tell your children of it. I am of the blood of 'Ti Panache and I speak for him, and he speaks for the gods . . . Go! You have heard me—go in peace!"

Into that valley while the black horde still stumbled pouring from it through the narrow cut in the hills beyond, the planes came down one after another, jounced over the roughly trod ground, raked thundering to their landings. The lieutenant-commander who had been in command of the Navy flight at St. Von was one of the first men out of the cockpits, and with him came Rosemary Canniston, helmetless, wearing the commander's leather jacket and a pair of goggles which were jammed high on her head and had not kept the windstream from tousling her hair into thick locks about her cheeks.

John Monk saw here where he stood with Devrars and 'Ti Panache before the altar, having just finished cross-examining the renegade priests and *logias* leaders. 'Ti Panache and Long Tom Devrars had done most of the talking with those men, and Tom Devrars was copying down now the statement of confession and appeal to all the revolting blacks throughout the islands that 'Ti Panache dictated in language that was beyond misinterpretation and denial. John Monk just left them; he ran forward, forgetful of them and of the high-ranking officers who followed the lieutenant-commander.

HE picked Rosemary Canniston right up off her feet and kissed her so she could not speak. "I know what you're going to tell me," he said when finally he let her down. "You wanted to get out here so fast that you forgot that a man as much in love as I am could ever get hungry."

She shook her head at him, her eyes still sombre, her voice hoarsely broken when she spoke:

"It's all over? It's—the peace?"

He turned and pointed towards Long Tom Devrars and 'Ti Panache and the sullenly hopeless group of men before them. "That's the end of it, right there. Savol's dead; Bouqui killed him. Londesi shot himself, the poor swab. Those are the other leaders. We just got a full confession from them. 'Ti Panache is planning now to take them all through the islands by plane and under guard. He will talk to the other blacks, and they will talk. If they talk well, and describe all that has happened, and why, if they do their

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best to have full peace restored, we've promised them they won't be executed and after they have been finally released, they will be allowed to return to their own people. But, of course, that's up to Havana, and Washington and London. What did you hear in Havana before you left?"

Her hands took his shoulders, brought him nearer to her. . . "That what you thought before you left is so; the other islands had stopped, waiting to see what happened here in Cuba. They had been promised that Cuba would fall first. But, Cuba hasn't and Haiti and Santo Domingo haven't; none of them will now. You have won it, broken it here. Havana and Washington and London will listen to you; they will do what you say . . . " She looked down. Near her feet, the drummers had squatted, and a huge *bois-de-chene* drum, decorated with the palm fibre fringe of the Haitian hills, lay smashed and broken there, a cracked, crescent-shaped litter of others behind her. "You've smashed the drums," she said. "You've stopped their roaring; you've stopped war. That's all there is to say. Except you and I—"

"—Breakfast," John Monk said, but leaning forward to kiss her again.

"Except you and I," she repeated steadfastly, "are going to drink champagne and eat caviar for breakfast. Because the lieutenant-commander was the only man in Havana who would bring me out here, and one of the very few who thought you and the rest were really going to win, and would ever need another breakfast. He was at St. Von and he knows we're seagoing people, and he says that in the Navy that's all a before-the-wedding breakfast ever is. But I can still recall several of the sentences of the last two radios we exchanged."

"And that Tom Devrars was stipulated as best-man, if not caviar for breakfast. Look," He took her by the shoulder, turned her. Distant from the others, as though they no longer existed and nothing else existed, Goring, the tall Marine, and Giulia Londesi stood half-hidden but very close together in under the wing of an empty fighting plane. "Tom Devrars is a tough man to ask to be a best man, but, before he's through I'll bet you he'll be playing in a double-header."

"Keep your money," Rosemary Canniston told him, gripping his arm tightly and smiling up at him. "Don't forget, you've got to buy a ring . . . "

THE END

ANOTHER CARSE STORY WILL BE PUBLISHED SOON

Insects That Protect Books

HELPFUL indeed are the bugs which make it their life work to protect books. The book scorpion is a sort of minute brown spider about an eighth of an inch long. It inhabits antiquated books and papers, especially those containing book lice, without which life for the scorpion would be one long hunger march.

—*Delos White.*

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When Roosevelt Reese was appointed "Depity-Sheriff," his first job was to arrest a murderer—his own brother

In his right hand was a revolver

Beyond Hanging Dog

By HAPSBURG LIEBE

HE was tall and lean and much sunburned, with blue eyes, a generous mouth, and a thatch of cinnamon-brown hair. Except that he now had on flat-heeled, high-laced boots for walking, his clothing was that of a cowboy. Over one shoulder he carried a blanketroll; from the other was slung, by a faded ribbon, a battered guitar of Mexican make. The station loungers, and a few others, ogled him curiously as he stepped off the mid-morning train here in this little Tennessee foothills town.

"Hello, Reese," barked a sober-faced, grizzled man who had a silver star on the left side of his vestfront. "I hoped you'd never come back."

Old Sheriff Lem Bodine was called hard.

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In point of cold fact, he wasn't hard enough. After very nearly three consecutive terms in office, the mountainous back half of his county still made high sport of his efforts to bring it within the pale of civilized law.

The returned mountaineer in cowboy clothes walked straight to Bodine, drew up facing him squarely.

"Arizony never war home to me, Lem—no place air home to me but the old Smoky Bald country." Five years in the West had scarcely altered his dialect or broad drawl. "Ef you don't mind, I'd shore like to talk wi' you in private, Lem."

Bodine led him out of the thickening crowd and into the cool shade of a gnarled street maple. Reese glanced back at the now gaping loungers, and spoke again.

"I been a-thinkin' you'd fergot the buck-wild stuff I done here, Lem. None o' hit war criminal, y'know. I straightened plum' up, out thar in Arizony, and even l'arnt how to read and write some. Wanted to come back home and settle, and be wo'th somethin' to myself and other folks. I got a heap tired o' bein' a ring-tailed hellion, Lem."

"The West licked you, eh?" said the officer, with half a smile.

"No. I licked the West! It's quare, i-god, how I done that. You'll mebbe rickollect how I used to sing songs; could be heard a mile, wind right. Well, I licked the West by singin' to hit! My old mountain songs shore did tickle 'em. I'd started the wild stuff out thar, and a sheriff throwed me in jail. I sung myself out. Later I sung a outlaw out o' shootin' me. That Arizony sheriff, he war a fine feller. He made me a depity, and me and him, we rounded up a gang o' Border killers all by ourselves. Well—you ain't a-goin' to dig up anything ag'in me now, Lem, air you?"

Bodine's eyes became narrow and thoughtful. His voice was friendly.

"Maybe not. What you just told me about having been a deputy in Arizona is interesting, Reese. Er—I don't seem to remember your first name—"

"Roosevelt," quickly supplied the ex-wildcat. "R. V. Reese, is how I signs my name. I've l'arnt how to read and write some, like I said. The V., hit stands fer *velt*."

The old sheriff did not laugh. "I see. Named for the immortal Teddy. Well, Roosevelt, maybe we can strike a trade. I'll forget your hell-raising, if you'll be my deputy out beyond Hanging Dog Creek. You're a mountain man yourself, and the very fellow for the job. Said you'd come back to settle down, didn't you? All right, I'm callin' your hand!"

It was a job fraught with difficulties, Roosevelt Reese knew. He frowned. Then a mental picture of iron bars appeared between him and the seamed face of the officer. There was always a ready gun on Lem Bodine's hip. He, Roosevelt Reese, wanted to go home!

"So they's still 'No law beyond Hangin' Dog Creek,' like they used to say . . . Well—all right, Lem, I'll be yore depity out thar. Hit'll be hell to git by with that, but I'll shore try, i-god."

AN hour later, he was sworn in and leaving town with a deputy badge pinned over his heart like a target and a dare.

He crossed Hanging Dog Creek in the twilight, and was once more in his old haunts. The narrow, laurel-lined trail led him over a rocky ridge in thickening dusk. Below him in a broad, wooded valley he could see pinpoints of light, oil lamps or tallowdips burning in log houses. Well, he'd let them know he was coming. He had a clear, strong voice that would easily carry the length and breadth of the valley. He unslung his guitar and tuned it, strummed a chord and began to sing; it was a song that he'd found in the West—

I'll take my bri-i-i-i-idle
In my hand,
And go to jo-o-o-o-o-o-oin
That Ranger band.
I'll rare up o-o-o-o-o-o-on
My saddlebow,
And head my ha-a-a-a-a-awss
Fer Mexico!

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Para Mejico, para Mejico—
Pondre mi caballo para Mejico!

I'll ride all da-a-a-a-a-a-ay,
Ride all night,
A-hellin' it towa-a-a-a-a-ards
That redskin fight
Look out, Ra-a-a-a-a-a-a-angers,
Here I comes—
A shootin', ye-e-e-e-e-e-e-ellin'
Son 'f a gun!
Para Mejico, para Mejico—
Pondre mi caballo para Mejico!

He had noted, as he sent his bold voice booming through the early night, that lights in the valley were going out, one by one. Odd, this was. It puzzled him. Of all the people in the Smoky Bald country, he alone could sing like that. They couldn't possibly have forgotten either him or his singing. He slung his guitar, and went on down the narrow trail.

A few minutes, and a slender masculine form appeared dimly before him, stood there as motionless as a tree. He walked up to it, peered into a face that was much like his own face, and quite tragic.

"Spicer!" It was his brother, six years his junior. "Ain't you growed, though! Honest to gosh, I liked to not knowed you, Spicer. Nearly a man now, ain't you?"

"You been gone a long time, Roosevelt," the stalwart, barefoot youth, reminded soberly. At once he went on: "And a heap air happened. Pap thought you ort to writ back to us. I tole him 'at you couldn't write, and ner neither we'uns couldn't 'a' read hit ef you did."

"I can write now, i-god," Roosevelt Reese said proudly. "A little, anyhow. And read some too. I'd 'a' writ back, but I knowed you'uns couldn't read hit, and they warn't no post office here anyhow. Say—how come so many lights went out in the valley when they'uns heard me a-singin'?"

Spicer Reese stiffened. "You never guessed hit then? You ain't welcome here no more, Roosevelt. Fer why ain't you welcome? Fer because you air a depity o' the law, that's why, and a inemy!"

The older brother stared. "But—but how'd they know so quick?"

"S'arch me! Likely somebody war over yan in town and found out, and beat you acrost Hangin' Dog with the news," said Spicer. The pale early starlight showed sudden rage in his countenance. "You shore ort to thought o' Buck, Roosevelt!"

Buck was the eldest of Pap John Reese's seven sons, and the wildest—which is saying something.

"Yeah," muttered Roosevelt, "I knowed Buck war allus sawt o' out o' awdinary bad, but he ain't never been plum' criminal in hit."

"He ain't?" Spicer's voice was bleak. "Sheriff Lem Bodine didn't tell you about him a-killin' Sam Stebbins a day atter you left fer the West, ner about him a-killin' Mart Hensley only last week?"

"Buck done that?" gasped the new deputy.

"I never said he done hit!" warily flared young Spicer. "I only ast you, did Bodine tell you that?"

"So Buck has kilt two men." Roosevelt Reese's countenance now was more tragic than his brother's . . . "No, Bodine didn't tell me. I—I reckon he didn't know. Or, did he, now? We'uns Reeses has got the repitation o' never breakin' our word, much less our oath. And I tuck oath when I a'cepted the depity job. Dad-burn the luck. Ain't hit hell, Spicer? I got to arrest my own brother and take him down to hang. Ain't hit hell, Spicer—ain't hit?"

The younger brother shrank. "Take him down to hang . . . You'd do that? You? Why—you damn *furriner!*"

It was anathema, the last word in epithets. Roosevelt Reese clenched his hands, then froze. Spicer slipped into the laurels and was gone.

A BIG house of hewn logs, the old home was, in a setting of gnarled appletrees and cathedral-spired cedars. An almost full moon was rising, and its light showed him eight men sitting in homemade chairs on the rickety veranda. Eight men as motionless as so many graven images; four of these were his brothers, two were uncles, one was his father, the other his

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paternal grandfather. He drew up short at the worn stone step. There was a long minute of silence, except for the distant and lonesome baying of a hound at the gold-bright moon; then:

"Air that you, Roosevelt?" shakily drawled white-bearded Old Grandsir Reese, from his sheepskin-lined rocker.

"Yeah," he answered, "hit air me, Grandsir."

Gaunt, black-bearded Pap John Reese cleared his throat, but he did not speak. His black-bearded eldest, wildest son bent slightly forward in his chair and fixed a stern gaze upon the softly-gleaming deputy star. Old Grandsir spoke again.

"We heared you a-singin', Roosevelt. Hit war somethin' strange. I've wished and wished you war here to sing *Barbary Allen* fer me, my favoright song. Mind a-singin' hit fer me now, Roosevelt?"

For that one friend among all his kinsmen, Roosevelt Reese would do or dare anything. He sat down on the edge of the veranda, steeled himself against the hard eyes that were riveted upon him, and played and sang five of the thirty or more verses of the ancient ballad—which, a foothills preacher once had told him, had been a court song of Queen Elizabeth, and was therefore older than the United States—

She looked to the east,
She looked to the west,
And spied his corpst a-coming:
Put down, put down the corpst of clay
That I may look upon him!

The more she looked,
The more she mourned;
She fell to the ground a-crying:
Oh, take me up and carry me home,
For now I am a-dying!

Oh, mother, oh, mother,
Go make my bed—
Go make it long and narrow.
My William died fer love o' me;
I shall die fer sorrow!

Oh, father, oh, father,
Go dig my grave—
Go dig it long and narrow.
My William died for me today;
I'll die for him tomorrow!

They buried her in
The old churchyard;
They buried him anigh her.
On his grave there grew a rose;
On Barbary's grew a brier!

In the words and plaintive air there was something that had kept them alive in human hearts while generation after generation had passed back to the dust, and this quality now gripped his audience. He could sense that. He had sung himself into the good graces of the West; it was just possible, he thought, that he could sing himself back into the high favor of the other Reeses. While the spell was still on, he switched to another guitar chord and began a song that had been handed down from mouth to mouth in the big hills for decades instead of centuries—verses in a wholly different, rollicking vein—

I'll eat when I'm hongry,
And drink when I'm dry,
And ef trouble don't kill me
I'll live till I die!

I'll cuss when I'm riled up,
And fight when I'm mad;
I'll cry when I'm lonesome,
And laugh when I'm glad!

I'll rest when I'm ailin',
And work when I'm well;
And them which don't like hit
Gits a ticket to hell!

I'll sleep when I'm sleepy,
And wake when I please!
Purty Molly, purty Molly,
Come set on my knees—

Purty Molly, purty Molly,
I'll tell you no lie;
Ef trouble don't kill me,
I'll live till I die!

The moon being higher when Roosevelt finished, its light was correspondingly brighter. He could see now that each of his kinsmen had beside him a rifle, and he wondered why. Young Spicer appeared among them. He, too, was armed now. The other brother then materialized in their midst; with him were his three stalwart cousins; they, also, carried rifles. No

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woman was anywhere to be seen, and this fact disturbed Roosevelt further.

HE was ready to put a question, when the black-bearded Buck addressed him in rock-hard tones—"Depity Reese; huh?"

Deputy Reese choked back a surge of anger. "I didn't want the job, Buck. Had to take hit so's I could come back home. Lem Bodine'd 'a' slammed me in jail, ef I hadn't. But I shore didn't know I'd haf to arrest you fer a-killin' Sam Stebbins and Mart Hensley, i-god, Buck, and I hate that wuss'n red hell. Say—what're you'uns gethered here at Tap's with ready guns fer, anyhow? And whar's all o' the wimmern-folks at?"

His father, Pap John, answered the double question. "We'uns run the wimmern back, i-god, us not a-wantin' 'em shot accidental. We'uns air expectin' war any minute. Old Ben Hensley, Mart Hensley's pappy, made his brags 'at they'uns war a-goin' to hang Buck, and he air sent over to Nawth Ca'liner fer all o' the kin he had thar!"

He turned to the two sons who had just come in, barked at them: "Spicer, I tole you and Eb to scout around and watch fer them lowdown Hensleys. Roosevelt's gittin' back ain't no excuse—"

A voice from nearby shadows interrupted him.

It was a bitter voice, and hard, that of spade-bearded Ben Hensley. The clan Hensley had arrived!

"Don't move, none o' you'uns Reeses, I got eighteen rifles on you right now. We see you'uns, and you'uns cain't see us. Buck, he shot my son Mart, and he air got to hang fer a-doin' hit. That air the penalty the law pervides fer mudder. Git up and walk out here to me, Buck!"

As he spoke, the eighteen rifles had clicked in the shadows. It was grim emphasis, timed perfectly. Roosevelt Reese had put down his guitar and slyly loosened one end of his blanketroll; into his right hand dropped a big revolver, the one he'd used in Arizona. He said:

"This air Depity-Sheriff R. V. Reese a-talkin', Ben. Buck will mebbe hang, but ef he does hit won't be you that hangs him. Any man air got the right to a co'te trial by law—"

"You'uns cain't prove 'at Buck killed Mart!" flared Pap John.

"Oh, yeah, we can," clipped Ben Hensley. "Two onint'rested folks—Sary Enslow and Bob Peters—seed the killin'. Come here, Buck!"

The situation was tight and desperate. Roosevelt Reese, half expecting a bullet in his back, went to his feet and faced his killer brother. He tossed a set of manacles, which clattered on the veranda floor at Buck's booted feet.

"Put them irons on yore wrists, Buck," he ordered, "for because you air onder arrest."

The tomblike silence in the shadows behind him and to his right and left told him that the Hensleys were watching and waiting with bated breath. They, too, had known that he was a deputy now, but they hadn't thought that he would arrest his brother. He spoke again.

"Buck, don't be a fool! They got us kivered, and they'll shoot at the drap o' the hat, and damn well you know hit. O' course, they'd haf to kill me too, but that wouldn't do you no good. You put them handcuffs on!"

"Better do what he says, Buck," ordered Old Grandsir Reese. "Tell him to, John. Hit air a pore way out, but hit air the only way."

Then Ben Hensley said aloud:

"I reckon you mean business, Roosevelt, and we air a-goin' to gi' you a chancet. We'll draw off a piece and wait, a-watchin' the house clost—anybody 'ceptin' you and Buck which tries to leave will shore stop a bullet—we air a-givin' you ontel daylight to git started fer town with Buck, him in handcuffs."

SLIGHT sounds of footfalls told Roosevelt that the clan Hensley was backing away to deploy and surround the house. In that moment Pap John saw a

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chance; but the Reeses were outnumbered, and it was a slim chance; he gave no order. Roosevelt said quietly: "Everybody inside. I got some talk fer you'uns."

One by one the Reeses filed into the big, log-walled living room, taking their weapons with them. Pap John lighted an oil lamp on the high, smoked mantel, and turned to his son from the West.

"Ef only Eb and Spicer had done what I tole 'em, and watched—"

His eyes were flaming. Roosevelt interrupted. "Truth is, Pap, you warn't expectin' the inemy so soon." He put his guitar and blanketroll in a corner, and went on: "But hit air me you're mad at, and not Eb and Spicer thar. Atter I'd tuck oath to uphold the law, what else could I do? Reeses ain't never been saints, but we'uns air allus kep' our word, and I aim to keep my oath. Ef Buck didn't mudder Mart Hensley, the co'te'll clear him. Ef he did—he ort to hang!"

"Mart Hensley desarved to die," growled Pap John. "He called Buck a thief and a liar, and Buck warn't nary one."

"Bad, but not bad enough to git him killed," Roosevelt said. "Buck could 'a' jest knocked his face off, and ort to done hit, 'stid o' shootin' him dead. Pap, I l'arnt things whilst I war gone. I l'arnt we got to have law, i-god, or we won't have nothin'. I l'arnt we've been wuss'n Digger Injuns back here. Ignoranter'n hell. No school fer the young'uns. No preacher. No doctorin'. Fightin'. Killin'. Sufferin'. Why hit had to be me which brang the law acrost Hangin' Dog Creek, I don't know; but I've brang her, and you'll find she can be a sight better friend than inemy."

"Yeah," sneered Buck Reese—"and she'd break *my* neck!"

"No Reese never war hung, Roosevelt," bit out Pap John, "ner never will be hung. I air a-promisin' you that faithful."

With the gaze of his kinsmen hard upon him. Roosevelt began to pace the rough floor slowly, thinking. At last he turned to the guitar he'd brought from the West, got it, and sat down with it on one knee. The battered old instrument had been friend and companion to him on many a lonely Arizona night. It was friend and companion to him now. Sing himself back into the good graces of his people? Not with that deputy badge over his heart!

And yet, he sang—another old, old song—

Look down the lone green valley,
Whar the flowers blooms and fades.
Hit's thar that blue-eyed Ellen
Lays a-moulderin' in her grave.

One night the moon war shinin'—
And the stars war shinin' too—
When to her vine-strung cabin
Young Black John Simpson drew.

A dozen other verses followed these. Probably he didn't know what it was that he sang, for he was thinking, thinking. Still he could see no way out. Then he put the guitar down, and sat studying the toes of his boots. His kinsmen watched him narrowly. There was sympathy only in the eyes of Old Grandsir. But young Spicer's face did not seem quite so hard now.

Eb had gone up to the loft a few minutes before, to pry loose a board on either side of the roof and peer through at the enemy. It was a fairly high vantage point. The bright moonlight showed him enough to bring oaths to his lips. He was soon climbing back down the living room wall ladder, hurrying to his father, sober-visaged Pap John.

"They'uns air got us surrounded, all right," he reported, "and they air about twenty-five of 'em! Old Ben's wife's kin from Samson's Hell air here, as well as the Nawth Ca'liner Hensleys, and they'uns air a-drinkin' white mule!"

Roosevelt looked around. In the West they called it white scorpion. Pap John swore into his thick black beard. He beckoned his killer son, Buck, into the darkness of the dining room. They were gone for ten minutes. When they returned to the living room, Pap John addressed his deputy son:

"We'uns ain't afeared to fight, Roosevelt, which same I reckon you know. On t'other hand, they ain't no sense in a-com-

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mittin' suicide. We'uns could hold this house f'rever, and would, i-god, of they war any amount o' grub and water here. Well —hit looks like the best chancet fer Buck air a co'te trial; and so, at daylight you can start with him, Roosevelt."

"That air the wise thing, Pap," Roosevelt said. His voice, in spite of him, was not steady.

THEY catnapped until the first streaks of dawn spread fanwise above the rock-ribbed crest of Smoky Bald Mountain, then ate a ragged breakfast hastily. Not long after this, Roosevelt took two boxes of cartridges from his blanket-roll and pocketed them, and stepped toward Buck with irons. Buck submitted to them. The two went to the front door, and there Roosevelt, his Colt in his right hand, called: "Ay, Ben! Ben Hensley!"

A reply came at once. The deputy said: "I air a-startin' fer town with Buck, handcuffed. Some o' yore men air a-drinkin', and I warns you to keep 'em in their place. You unnerstand that?"

"Shore," the leader of the Hensleys answered. "A fair co'te trial is all we ast. We'll respeck the law ef hit's wo'th respeck."

Deputy R. V. Reese marched his prisoner brother across the ramshackle veranda and to the ground, halted him, turned and faced his sire in the doorway, and spoke in tones so low that they reached no Hensley ear.

"You got somethin' up yore sleeve, Pap, and I've guessed hit. Atter the Hensleys breaks up and leaves, you'uns aims to foller me and take Buck from me. Don't try that. This air hard enough fer me as hit lays. Fer God's sake don't make me kill some o' my own blood!"

Pap John Reese went ashen under his beard. In his stark staring eyes there was a beaten look. Before he could find words, Roosevelt and Buck were gone. The two did not take the old trail that led toward the foothills town that was the county seat.

"How come?" with a frown inquired Buck, after they had passed through the Hensley line.

"Down in that section whar Hangin' Dog Creek j'ines Mad Kate's river they's allus a loggin' camp or so, and ridin' a loggin' train beats walkin'," answered Roosevelt.

"Buck, you ort to know I hate havin' to do this here. Ef I had my ruthers, which I ain't, I'd ruther die."

"Yeah you would!" snorted Buck.

The sun was well up when officer and prisoner reached the creek at its point of confluence with the tumbling little river. In their ears now was the staccato exhaust of a steam skidder, that of a fussy little locomotive, neither of which was very far away. Buck halted a few yards from the sparkling water's edge, faced Roosevelt and growled:

"I ain't a-goin' no furder, i-god. Pap and Unc' Ahab and them war to overtake us this side o' the creek. You don't think they'll come, but I do."

Almost before he got this out, armed men were stepping from behind bowlders and laurel clumps to eastward and southward and moving toward them!

"Hit ain't the Reeses," breathed Roosevelt. "Hit's them Nawth Ca'liner Hensleys and Samson's Hell Bolands—a-drinkin', felt they'uns war a-bein' cheated, and got out o' old Ben's control—one of 'em air a-carryin' a plowline rope—!"

Buck had turned white. With his left hand Roosevelt swept Buck into the cover of a giant hemlock tree; with the other hand he jerked up his Colt.

"Stop, you'uns," he cried—"stop right thar! The one which takes another step, or raises a gun, will drap as shore as hell's hot!"

They halted. "We'uns air a-goin' to see that Buck Reese hangs, i-god," snarled a scraggly-bearded Boland in their lead. "Even ef you don't let him 'scape, some o' them smart town lawyers'll swear lies and git him clear. You drap that big pistol!"

HE threw his rifle to his shoulder. The Colt six-gun bellowed, and he crumpled like a boiled egg. His companions sprang for shelter, some of them

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firing as they sprang. Bullets scored the bark of the hemlock. The two Reeses now were kneeling behind it. Roosevelt peered out from a low point, and shot at a slouch hat that covered a rifle breech. A bitter oath came like an echo to the jarring blast.

"Take these handcuffs off, Roosevelt!" said Buck.

The deputy brother didn't have time. Some of the attackers were crawling through the underbrush like Indians, seeking to get at the Reeses from the flank. Roosevelt shot at them. They returned the fire with interest; it sounded like a pitched battle. His aim was better than theirs, but there were too many of them. Ten minutes, and Roosevelt Reese had bullet gashes in each shoulder, and the burns of two bullets across his gun arm. His gun was hot. Buck sat back against the tree and watched his brother from the West in evident admiration of the steel that was in him.

And then there was a burst of shots from scattered points beyond the Samson's Hell Bolands and North Carolina Hensleys. Buck had the answer first. "Hit's the Reeses! You and them has got 'em between you, the copper-head snakes. Give 'em hell, Roosevelt!"

Roosevelt did, certainly, and so did his kinsmen. The enemy withstood the galling fire for but a few minutes, then they fled, those of them who could. Roosevelt realized that the other Reeses would soon be upon him for the purpose of taking Buck. With frantic strength he caught his prisoner by a manacled wrist and dragged him into the swift water, falling with him over the slippery stones. The rapids of Mad Kate's River caught them and carried them downstream for more than a hundred yards before they were able to make the western bank. Buck had fought when he could. It had availed him nothing.

Two more minutes, and he was being shoved into a logging camp clearing. Before them stood a little locomotive with steam up, ready to be coupled to a string of loaded logging flats. Roosevelt Reese flashed his badge and drove the engineman off, picked his killer brother up bodily and threw him aboard the locomotive, and followed him. Buck lay as though stunned. Roosevelt released the brakes and opened the throttle. The locomotive started with a stuttering roar.

"Dang you, Roosevelt—" Buck was rising.

The other Reeses would never be able to overtake them. Roosevelt had a glimpse of his kinsmen beyond the turbulent little river, as he made for Buck to hold him. But there was no need to hold Buck. A bullet had crossed the stream, and a circle of red was forming rapidly on the front of the killer's shirt. Roosevelt knew. He sobbed. He closed the throttle and applied the brakes, and the locomotive came to a grinding halt just below the camp clearing, Buck grinned up at him in triumph, closed his eyes—was dead. Then Pap John and Ahab Reese, and half a dozen of their sons, all of them dripping wet, came swarming. Roosevelt clambered weakly to the ground. A red mist swam before his eyes, a mist not born of anger. In his tortured brain flashed words that his iron father had spoken—

"No Reese war never hung . . . ner never will be hung."

"Some o' you'uns shot Buck!" gasped Roosevelt.

"You cain't never prove that, never on this earth," quietly replied Pap John—and he was correct. He put an arm almost tenderly about the bleeding shoulders of his fighting deputy son.

"Here comes Ben Hensley," they heard him saying. "Ben didn't have nothin' to do with the fight, Roosevelt. You, Ben. Looky thar at Buck. He's paid his debt, and they ortn't be nothin' betwixt us Reeses and Tennessee Hensleys now. My son Roosevelt, he brang the law acrost Hangin' Dog Creek. I cain't give another son to death! We'uns Reeses air willin' to let the law stay, ef you'uns Hensleys air. You'uns willin'?"

"No man can go me one better, i-god," quickly answered spade-bearded old Ben Hensley—"we'uns air."

THE END

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The Monster of the Lagoon

By GEORGE F. WORTS

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

WHEN Singapore Sammy Shay headed for the South Seas island of Little Nicobar in his schooner, the Blue Goose, he had heard of the unnamed monster that was supposed to inhabit the lagoon of the island, but he had no idea what kind of monster it was. Nobody had, for that matter.

The only thing definite anyone seemed to know was what old Pegleg Pyke told Sammy. Many years before, Pegleg had encountered the monster at night, and although he had not seen it, he had lost a leg to it. Pegleg joined Sam's expedition, which included Lucky Jones, his partner; Professor Bryce Robbins, who wanted to take the monster back alive as a scientific specimen; Laughing Larry McGurk, the lad who couldn't be killed —although doctors had given him only two more months to live; and two stowaways: Pete Cringle, a young deep-sea diver looking for adventure, and Julie Farrington, who had deserted the yacht Wanderer in Penang to get away from her host, Hector Barling, and her mother, who wanted her to marry Barling.

Pegleg Pyke elected to spend a night in a stone hut on the shore of the lagoon, and in the night he disappeared, although the iron door had been locked from the outside. Determined to discover the nature of the monster, Singapore Sammy decided to run the Blue Goose into the lagoon at night. In the meantime, the Wanderer had come

The most dangerous, most horrible creature that ever lived in the sea boards Singapore Sammy's schooner

"Good Lord! What is it?"

This story began in the Argosy for February 23

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to the island, and Barling had joined forces with the other hunters after the monster.

CHAPTER XV (*Continued*).

INTO THE LAGOON.

AS if she were being prepared for sea battle, the Blue Goose was made ready for that dubious expedition into the lagoon. The deck was cleared of all unnecessary objects. All the firearms on board were brought on deck, oiled and loaded. The cutlasses were sharpened.

Each man was assigned his station, and Sammy gave them station drill.

He said, "We don't know what this thing is going to be. We will probably get the scare of our lives. This isn't going to be a Sunday-school picnic."

Bryce said, "Remember this: the creature is not to be killed." He objected to the use of pistols, revolvers and Thompson guns.

"It looks to me more like an errand of slaughter than an expedition of investigation."

"Don't worry," Lucky said, jeeringly, "we'll promise to handle it with kid gloves."

The remainder of the day was spent in bolting into place all the rail bayonets that had not been used—on the theory that if the creature could send a tentacle through a three-inch peephole, or thrust its entire body through, a six-inch space between the bars was too generous.

When this task had been finished, the sun was setting. Ah Fong served supper on deck. The crew of the Blue Goose, pale and apprehensive, ate little. They watched night creep over the lagoon. Mist appeared in wisps and banners. As the darkness increased, the smoky green of the phosphorescence glowed more and more brightly.

The tide would turn at a few minutes after eight. It was Sammy's intention to take the Blue Goose into the lagoon at precisely eight thirty.

Sammy had a final talk with the assembled men. He said: "There's no telling how dangerous this will be, because we don't know what we're up against. If any of you think we're running too big chances, you can duck now—and nobody will hold it against you. You can stay on the Wanderer. Speak up!"

No one spoke. He said: "Don't kid yourselves. This is dangerous. None of us may come back alive. The thing may even sink this schooner. And it wouldn't be a pleasant death. I'm not trying to scare you, but I'm telling you—it's dangerous."

Still no one spoke. Every man was gazing through the black night at the swimming green haze of the lagoon. The bubbling of the mud pots came clearly. It was like a giant's sardonic chuckling. And on the night breeze, the sinister odor of the great orchids came floating out.

Lucky said, "It's eight twenty."

Singapore asked him if he had checked the engine thoroughly.

"Yeah. Every square inch of her. Senga—Oangi—Pete! Stand by to raise the anchor."

Lucky went below and started the engine. The muttering and blubbering of the exhaust drowned the sound of oars alongside. Sammy did not know that Julie was anywhere in the vicinity until he saw her blond head shining like a halo in the light of a deck lamp.

A moment later Mr. Barling came aboard from another boat.

JULIE was looking about her with shining, excited eyes. She saw men, like the ghosts of pirates, flitting about the deck. They were stripped to the waist. Each had a cutlass in his hand, a revolver or pistol strapped to his waist.

Sammy reached her just as Mr. Barling, puffing and gasping, said, "Julie! This isn't fair! You promised—"

"I promised to sleep aboard the yacht. I'm needed here. If any of these men get hurt, there's no one to nurse them."

Singapore told her curtly to get off the ship. Julie ran forward and hid in the shadows. A rumbling forward indicated

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that the anchor was up. A moment later Pete Cringle yelled: "She's up and down."

Senga, having returned aft, advanced the throttle and let in the clutch. The schooner forged ahead, the bows dipped slightly, then the anchor came clear of the bottom, and the chain was windlassed in.

Julie could not be found. Sam barked at Mr. Barling: "You'd better clear out, mister. We're going into the lagoon."

He saw that the patent medicine king was sweating and white. Mr. Barling was scared. Mr. Barling was terrified.

"I'll s-stay!" he chattered.

He was going to be brave, Sam supposed, to impress Julie. But there was no time now for arguments. Oangi and Pete Cringle came aft, took in the accommodation ladder, stowed it below and closed the gap in the rail.

Julie did not reappear until the schooner was well into the inlet. Sam said: "The place for you, baby, is in the crosstree. Scramble up there and keep a lookout."

She picked up a cutlass and climbed to the crosstree. Sammy took a quick turn about the deck, to make sure everything was in readiness. Lucky Jones and Ah Fong were stationed in the bows. Sam gave Mr. Barling a station amidships, and furnished him with cutlass and revolver. Oangi and Pete Cringle were stationed amidships, one on the port, one on the starboard side. Senga was at the wheel. Bryce and Larry were at the taffrail.

Sammy had no station. He would go where he was needed.

He went forward. The schooner was now entering the thin mist. It was cold.

With engine at slow speed, the Blue Goose entered the lagoon.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MONSTER STRIKES.

SINGAPORE SAMMY moved restlessly about the deck. The thin, sinister mist dimmed the stars and reduced the glittering lights of the Wanderer, at anchor a mile away, to a blur.

There was something dreamlike, unreal about it all. It was as if the water were giving off the steam, and, with its strange, faintly acrid smell, it was easy to imagine that the beginnings of the world had been like this, with this queer smell and with mist obscuring everything, the water glowing ghostly green with phosphorescence.

All the tales he had heard of the monster were going through his brain now. He tried to picture it as a definite, familiar beast of the sea. But he could not hold any picture. Swarming into his mind came monsters of mythology—sea serpents and creatures slimy and green with fins like the dragons of Chinese legend.

At the crosstree, Julie suddenly cried: "Something in the water dead ahead! Moving this way! Coming to meet us!"

Sam shouted: "Can you make it out?"

Her answer was a hysterical scream: "No! No! It hasn't a shape!"

He had run forward. Standing beside Lucky, he stared into the swirl of the mist, illuminated by the phosphorescence as if by green hell-fire.

Perfectly silhouetted against the bright green of the depths was the clear-cut black body of a small shark. It streaked off to starboard, leaving a trail of black bubbles in the green, and a swirling of the luminous water marking its passage.

Lucky said tensely: "I can't see it!"

And Sam called: "Julie! Do you make it out?"

She cried: "It—it seems to be everywhere—a weird kind of dark—writhing around. But I can't make it out. *We're on it!*"

She stopped. In the emerald green effulgence he could see her slim body clearly. She was holding to the shrouds, leaning out, staring.

The green luminance bathed the masts to their tips and it gave to every face a corpselike glow.

The schooner seemed to stagger slightly.

Lucky roared: "We're aground! Senga! Hard a-starboard!"

And Sammy shouted, "No! Steady on!"

Ah Fong, that placid Chinaman, sudden-

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ly uttered a scream. And Sammy simultaneously made a hideous discovery. A slimy ooze was creeping up about the ship, sliding up the sides, sliding between and past and over the steel bayonets!

Worse than any nightmare was this amazing, horrifying invasion.

Slipping, sliding, oozing through the bristling row of bayonets, the slime came aboard. It gleamed and glowed with a pale green fire of its own. It formed tentacles. These instantly became snakes, or eels, without heads, without eyes, without apparent guiding intelligence. The air was filled with that strange acid stench.

Sammy started aft at a run, shouting: "Full speed ahead! Shake this thing off!"

Behind him, Lucky yelled, "Good Lord, what is it?"

All about the ship men were shouting and hacking at the writhing, snake-like tentacles. As Sammy raced aft, he saw a great colorless column rise out of the sea at least twenty feet astern. It resembled a waterspout. It was a pillar of the smoldering green slime! It rose up, headless and horrible, just as the bodies of legendary sea serpents were said to rise.

IT shot up swiftly with splayed ends to attain a height of perhaps twenty feet, then it plunged unerringly at the schooner's stern. It touched the rail with a thud which Sammy could hear above the shouts of the men and Julie's horrified screams. Then it came arching and writhing aboard.

The splayed ends were like the forked tongue of a snake—a snake as large as a mountain.

They struck down at Senga. He darted away from the wheel, but he could not escape. The headless thing reached his head with incredible alacrity. It wound and enfolded his head. The Malay screamed once. Sammy saw his head vanish—mysteriously and horribly crushed and torn into fragments. He saw the Malay's arms torn out and he saw them disintegrate.

He leaped at that twisting column. He slashed at it with his cutlass. He could not sever that terrible snake-like arm. He had supposed that the stuff was a soft slime. It was not a soft slime. It was as tough as the hide of a shark.

Senga had entirely vanished—swiftly destroyed and mysteriously and dreadfully consumed by this hideous unknown thing.

The arm had coiled about Sammy. He felt the sharp sting, the pressure of it on his back. He slashed and hacked. He did not know that he was cursing and shrieking like a madman. He did not know that all over the ship men were cursing and shrieking like madmen.

It was as if they had sailed from the world of men into a world of nightmare.

Hacking and slashing, Sammy presently severed the head of the tentacle. He hacked at the clinging mass about his chest. The stuff fell away from him to the deck. Instantly it changed shape. It became a pool of slime with live tentacles reaching out frantically in all directions.

And this was the most shocking discovery so far. This awful slime, of tough consistency, had no central brain. Each part of it was its own center of energy and motion.

Desperately, he hacked at the writhing pool of the stuff at his feet. It was reaching out for the main body, or mass. Suddenly, a tentacle joined it. Miraculously, the puddle of slime flowed into the tentacle; instantly became part of it. And this re-formed tentacle struck at him again!

Sammy leaped back and ran to the other side of the ship. Bryce Robbins was hacking away at a mass of tentacles of all sizes, some as thick as a man's wrist, some as thick as a man's thigh, which came flowing aboard and which seemed determined to enfold and destroy him.

Sammy had a momentary fear that none of them would leave the lagoon alive. Every man aboard was fighting for his life. Even Hector Barling, with his white dinner jacket in shreds, was cursing and slashing at the oncoming tentacles.

Stopping at the mainmast shrouds, Sammy received the most sickening shock so far. A tentacle at least five inches in diameter had swarmed up the shrouds to where

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Julie clung. She was striking at it with her cutlass. Below her, Larry McGurk was similarly engaged, trying to free her.

SAMMY lent his help. He began chopping at the tentacle as a man would chop at a tree. With a better purchase for his feet than either Julie or the mate had, he severed it swiftly.

The slender column of phosphorescent slime came slithering down. He did not wait for it all to reach the deck, but hacked at it as it came. He severed it again. He kicked the chunks away from each other. He continued to bring the cutlass down as if it were an ax. When he had cut the column into a half dozen lengths, he hacked at them.

Someone shouted hoarsely: "It's going! We're leaving it astern!"

Sammy ran aft. Bryce Robbins had taken the wheel. One of his hands was limp. He was panting and weakly cursing.

Streaming aft, the mass of the thing was dragging through the water. Perhaps a hundred tentacles ran like hawsers from the rail and the hull to the shapeless great mass.

Sammy chopped away at these. Lucky Jones came limping aft to join him. Larry McGurk came aft and aided them. Tentacles when they snapped formed pools on deck and were joined by other pools. Some of these reached the rail and slithered overboard.

The Blue Goose suddenly seemed to leap ahead. This was due to the fact that the last of the clinging tentacles had been chopped through, or had snapped.

They were, for the present at least, free of that hideous, shapeless thing.

The schooner forged through the water. And behind it came the thing, a wallowing, churning, monstrous mass—of what? There existed no question, at least, of its disposition.

It was fury incarnate. It was as if the emotion of wrath had been reduced to this animate and horrible stuff.

The thing followed them, churning the lagoon to foam, shooting out long tentacles like arms of lightning at the escaping hull. But the Blue Goose, at eleven knots, could not be overtaken.

When Singapore realized this, he laughed and sobbed with relief. He knew that they were dead men who had been miraculously spared.

Senga's last living act had spared them. By giving the engine full throttle, he had defeated the thing.

But now came another danger. The schooner was lost in the mist from the volcanic mudpots. It was impossible, from deck, to see a hundred yards into the mist. The engine speed could not be checked, or they would be overtaken and annihilated by the thing.

Sammy knew that he could fight no more. He was exhausted by his efforts and the nervous strain. Yet the Blue Goose could not be checked, could not be anchored until dawn came and they found the inlet. And they could not safely maneuver about in the lagoon. The thing might corner them in a cove, or they might run aground. In either case, they would be annihilated.

Looking aloft, he saw that Julie was still clinging to the shrouds at the crosstree.

He shouted: "Julie! What can you see from up there? Can you see the inlet?"

She called down, faintly: "No. But it's off over there to starboard. I saw it a moment ago. I can just see the Wanderer's lights."

A thud on deck behind him made him turn about. Bryce had fainted at the wheel.

Sammy took his place while Larry McGurk joined Julie at the crosstree. She was afraid, she said, that she would faint.

But she didn't faint. Only two of that company were unconscious from the horror they had been through. One was Bryce. The other was Hector Barling.

NOT daring to let a sharp, sudden turn reduce the schooner's speed, Sammy put the wheel over easily, a few spokes, and made a long, wide circle. Then, as the mate called down directions, he headed the Blue Goose for the inlet.

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The wake was almost a perfect semicircle. Threshing and churning about in it, lashing the water into liquid green fire with its tentacles and the writhing and lungings of its great central mass, the nameless horror followed.

Bryce Robbins regained consciousness as Sammy piloted the schooner through the inlet. He sat up and saw Lucky, standing near by in the stern, shouting oaths and taunts and emptying the last of three machine guns into the frenzied, threshing mass astern.

The scientist came weakly to his feet and shouted: "Stop that!"

Lucky jeered: "What the hell? If you expect to take that thing back alive, you're nuts!"

Bryce staggered to the taffrail. Panting, he rested his hands on it.

Lucky snarled: "Yah! There's your octopus, smart guy!"

The scientist, gasping and uttering short, sharp groans, grasped the rail and stared at the frantically pursuing mass of radiant green.

Then he glared at Captain Jones.

"You fool!" he panted. "Octopus! Eel! It's greater than anything we imagined! It's stupendous! It's the greatest living wonder of the world!"

"Aw, you're screwy!"

SOMEONE forward announced that the Wanderer had come close inshore, was lying broadside off the mouth of the inlet. Through the thinning mist, Sammy heard the hysterical screams of Mrs. Farrington. Later, Sammy learned that Captain Milikin had heard their shouts and cries and had come close in to render what assistance he could, but had not dared take the yacht into the lagoon.

Sammy estimated his distances. It looked to him as if there was insufficient room for the schooner to squeeze out past the yacht, and he must keep the engine turning over at top speed. He was certain that incredible, tentacled mass, in its malignant fury, would pursue them out into the sea.

But it did not. The tide had turned. There was a sharp green line marking the tiderip. The lagoon water was vividly green, while the ingoing water from the sea was only faintly luminous. At that sharp line, the nameless monster stopped. Not only did it stop, but it began to move away—toward the center of the lagoon.

Bryce shouted, "I knew it! It checks with my theory! That lagoon water has some element in which that thing exists. It cannot exist in ordinary sea water. We must go back! We must prove it!"

"Like hell," Lucky panted.

"Go back!" the scientist insisted. "I'm paying for this show!"

"You're crazy," Singapore said. "We're lucky to be out of there with our skins."

Bryce came toward him, with the glassy, dark eyes, the snow-white skin of a man insane.

"Get away from that wheel!" he shouted. "I'll take her in!"

Lucky sprang at him; struck him twice in the head with fists like hobnail boots. The scientist went down to hands and knees, shaking his head as a punch drunk fighter does in the ring, muttering and almost sobbing, with blood drooling from his lips.

One hand pounced on an automatic pistol lying in the slime on the deck. But before he could aim it, Lucky kicked it out of his hand and Bryce groaned: "Before we're through, I'm going to kill you!"

Sam told Lucky to take the wheel. When Lucky relieved him, Sam helped the scientist to his feet. He said sternly, "Keep your head on, fella. You saw what happened to Senga. Anyhow, why prove your theory all over again?"

He took Bryce down to his cabin and gave him a stiff drink of whisky. Then he went on deck and took inventory. Senga was the only outright casualty. Senga had died instantly and horribly—dubtless as Pegleg Pyke had died and, twenty-six years before him, Gurt Vandernoot.

Julie and Larry McGurk had come down from the crosstree. The lower part of her white sailor's jacket had been torn off. The

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tentacle had encircled her waist, had burned her skin on the left hip in a patch as large as her hand.

Bryce had suffered a broken wrist bone. Ah Fong had lost two of the fingers of his left hand, and an ear. Mr. Barling's right arm was broken at the elbow. Oangi's right foot was smashed. Lucky's left ankle was sprained. And Singapore Sammy had a wrenched back. It was beginning to hurt. And it was going to hurt worse.

Strangely—or not so strangely, perhaps—the man who was doomed to die, the man who couldn't be killed, had not been hurt in the least!

CHAPTER XVII.

BRYCE EXPLAINS.

JULIE called to the Wanderer for immediate medical assistance. Mr. Barling's personal physician was too ill to leave his cabin. Dr. Plank was suffering from sun fever, was running a high temperature, and was almost delirious. But he came.

He bound up sprains, sewed up wounds, set broken bones and smeared acid burns with unguents. When he had finished his work, Dr. Plank collapsed. So did Mr. Barling. The doctor and Mr. Barling, the latter suffering from complete exhaustion, were taken aboard the Wanderer.

And the survivors of that fantastic battle with the most dangerous, most horrible creature that ever lived in the sea, huddled in the stern of the schooner, drank whisky in an attempt to restore their shattered nerves, and hysterically discussed what they had individually seen and experienced.

It was like the babbling of men after a night of nightmare. What they had been through was too incredible to be grasped. It would take them days to sort out their experiences and to become normal.

Bryce Robbins was not among them. Immediately after the Blue Goose anchored, he took two stiff drinks of whisky and went to his stateroom with samples of that strange, tough, slimy substance.

He returned to the afterdeck with the announcement that they had all taken part in one of the most amazing discoveries in the history of science.

Flushed with this new excitement, stuttering in his eagerness, he burst out: "An anomaly! An absolute anomaly!"

And Lucky Jones growled: "What the hell is an anomaly?"

"An exception—a reversal of rules. This is a reversal of all the rules I know. Do you know what that thing is?" he cried. "It's an amœba! A giant, monstrous amœba! It revolutionizes all scientific concepts. It is utterly and stupendously amazing! It is a giant mass of protoplasm—a unicellular organism of tremendous size!"

"Keep it simple," Julie advised. "We aren't scientists."

He tried to explain it to them in simple layman's language.

"Men, animals, are composed of billions of cells. An amoeba is a microscopic creature, composed of one cell. An amœba reproduces by splitting in halves. This thing in the lagoon is an amœba, but it is a freak. Instead of reproducing, it grew from a speck of life invisible except under a microscope, to this incredible size! Why, I don't know. Perhaps some curious freak of its structure caused it—aided by the strange acid in the lagoon water. In other words, a tiny, single cell has become this hideous and horrible thing—a single cell weighing many tons, possessed of a shrewd and horrible intelligence. It is probably millions of years old. It is the most amazing thing the world has ever known!"

JULIE said, "Why, it's tur-rific! Does this thing look like an amœba, Bryce? Does it act the same?"

He cried: "It *is* an amœba, only with these astounding differences. The amœba changes form continually. Short processes flow out from the cell body in different directions, and the rest of the protoplasm appears to flow or be pulled along after them. In this way the amœba is able to progress slowly, by means of these *pseudopodia*, or false feet. They are protruded at any part

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of the cell body or on several parts at the same time. I am talking about the microscopic amœba.

"When this amœba encounters a vagrant bacterium or other food, it throws out these false feet, on both sides of the object; they flow around it, feet beyond, and thus swallow into the body the wandering bacterium. The food has been *ingested.* Inside the amœba are products secreted which *digest* it. The parts of the food which are indigestible the amœba rejects by a reverse process called egesting. These three processes are not localized, but take place in any part of the body.

"Now this monster is the same amœba, only of terrific size, invested with a shrewd and malignant intelligence, and of remarkable speed. It shoots out *pseudopodia,* or tentacles, with almost lightning swiftness. We saw it shoot a tentacle up the shrouds and attempt to seize and ingest Julie. We saw it shoot a tentacle out of the water to a height of twenty-five feet and attack the *serang.* It enclosed his head and shoulders. It ingested his body, tearing it into little fragments, so swiftly that the eye could hardly follow. It was the same with Pegleg.

"Such parts of him as were unfit for food were rejected—his clothing, his teeth, his wooden leg, the buttons of his clothes, his shoes, and so forth.

"We know now how it devoured Pegleg. It sent a tentacle into the room through that three-inch hole. It fairly poured itself through that hole. Once inside that room, it took new forms—shooting out large and small tentacles to overcome and devour Pegleg. Once he was consumed, it simply flowed itself out of that peephole again. No wonder we were amazed and terrified!"

Larry McGurk interrupted: "Is this anything like that fragment of chicken heart which Dr. Carrol is keeping alive in broth in New York, and which would grow to the size of the earth if it weren't kept under control and constantly cut away?"

Bryce said, "There is no similarity. That fragment of chicken's heart consists of millions of cells. This—this thing consists of but one cell. Yet I must contradict myself. It brings us to the most amazing, most fantastic phase of this creature's structure and being. You will hardly believe me, yet I am sure I am speaking the truth."

He paused. He shook a finger at the semi-circle of upraised faces as if he were addressing students in a classroom.

"I said that this creature, this thing, this monstrous amœba, consists of one cell. But let me tell you a horrible thing. Floating, or somehow moving about within this strange, tough, slimy mass, are brain cells! They are not the type of cells, or centers, found in the ordinary amœba. In the ordinary amœba, the center is called the nucleus. This monster has, strictly speaking, no nucleus.

"But scattered about in the mass of it are free, or independent, brain cells—*and these brain cells are the brain cells of men it has ingested!*"

JULIE protested: "Oh, Bryce! After all, you've told us that it secretes a powerful kind of acid, and that this acid is the stuff with which it digests things so quickly. If it digests skulls and fingernails, how can a brain cell escape?"

Bryce smiled excitedly. "You're getting into deep water. I can explain it, but not simply. In this tough, slimy stuff of which it consists there are small patches or clusters of a neutral kind of stuff—I mean they contain no acid. They have the power to digest nothing. If this creature wished, it could surround any object—your finger, let us say—with this neutral stuff—and your finger would not be digested. That is what happens with occasional brain cells of men it ingests."

Sammy interrupted: "Are you trying to tell us that that—that thing does its thinking with the brain cells of men it has killed and ingested?"

"Exactly!"

"How horrible!" Julie wailed.

"But," Bryce said, "and get this straight: it has no central brain. There are strings, or clusters, of these human

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brain cells scattered throughout it like—like raisins in a cake! I don't say that this monster thinks, in the sense with which we use the word.

"But with these brain cells it is enabled shrewdly, even cleverly, to carry out its purpose on earth."

Lucky jeered: "This is gettin' good. Tell us what its purpose is on earth."

"To eat! That's all! It has no other purpose or function. Its sole job on earth is to keep itself supplied with food. Since time began—since its time began—it has had no other job. It is nothing but appetite incarnate. You saw it attack us. You saw it furiously, with a horrible eagerness, thresh and plunge after us in the water. It did not attack us because we are its enemy. It recognizes us only as food—food for an appetite so ravenous, so horrible that you could not possibly imagine hunger like it."

Sam stopped him with: "What do you mean—it recognizes us? Can it see us?"

"Positively not. It has no eyes, no ears, no taste, no smell. It has nothing but supersensitive feeling. To this sensitive surface, all things are alike—sound, waves, light waves and other vibrations. I question whether it could distinguish between heat and cold. Its surface is supersensitive, however, to the nearness of anything fit for food. Once it senses the imminence of food, it attacks. It can attack with horrible wrath, as we saw it attack, or it can attack with diabolical ingenuity, as we know it attacked Pegleg.

"We saw the sureness and fury with which it seized and ingested the shark. We saw the speed and cleverness with which it plucked birds from the air. And that's all it is—stark, insensate, insatiable hunger!"

Julie said: "It's horrible!"

"I doubt if this appetite has ever been appeased. I now believe the stories we have heard of its devouring a whale, of its swarming over and sinking pearling luggers—devouring every man, every edible thing aboard.

"This strange acidity in the lagoon may have developed other freaks of nature, but this monster amœba would have eaten them before they could grow. It has always been master of the lagoon."

HE looked at Singapore Sammy and shook his head. "I'm afraid you're going to be disappointed about your pearls, Sam. In its search for food, this monster has, I think you'll find, literally scrubbed the floor of the lagoon clean. Any clam or other bivalve wouldn't have a chance. It would absorb them, digest the meat and reject the shell."

"The other rumors are true," Sam said doggedly. "We've proved they're true. And I heard the pearl rumor on good authority."

"There are no bivalves in this lagoon," Bryce said in his didactic way.

Pete Cringle muttered: "Just the same, we're gonna look."

"If there ain't pearls," Lucky said, "then the whole expedition is a flop. How do you figure we're goin' to capture that thing?"

"We don't have to capture all of it," Bryce answered. "A good-sized chunk will do. You saw it in action. What happened when you chopped off a piece of tentacle? Didn't you see it form a pool on deck? Didn't you see these pools shoot out tentacles until they found and rejoined the main body? But wait! In some cases you didn't see this occur. Why not? I'll tell you! The pools that remained lifeless, that did not shoot out tentacles, that made no attempt at rejoining the main mass were without brain cells!"

"All you want then," Larry said, "is a good-sized chunk full of brain cells."

"Exactly! I'll take it back to New York! I'll give the scientific world a greater surprise than Dr. Carrol's chicken's heart did!"

"But," Julie argued, "you say it will stay alive only in water containing this funny acid."

"That's easy. I'll take the chunk in lagoon water. I'll take a supply of the water along. I'll have it analyzed by the best chemists on earth. We'll find what the acid is. We'll duplicate it!"

"How," Julie asked, "will you get the

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chunk you want? We don't dare let it attack us again."

Bryce said optimistically, "We'll find a way."

"We'll rest up a few days," Lucky said. "We won't monkey with that thing again until we're up to it."

The voice of Captain Milikin floated across the water from the Deisel yacht.

"Miss Farrington! Your mother wants to know if you'll come over. She's having hysterics."

Julie answered, "Okay. Send over the tender."

Singapore Sammy started up out of his deck chair. He fell back with a groan, collapsing.

He said, "My back got a bad wrench. Somebody had better help me to my cabin. I can't walk."

Bryce and Larry helped him down the stairs to his cabin. They undressed him and rubbed his back with liniment, but the pain did not ease.

When Larry had gone, Bryce, staring down at the pale, red-headed man in the bunk, said, "Look here, Sam. You're game to go through with this, aren't you?"

"Sure."

"If it's a question of more money—"

"It isn't. I'll go through with it. But we've got to be more careful. I want no more men killed. Senga sailed with me for six years. He was like a brother."

"There'll be no more casualties," Bryce said. "We'll take every precaution."

The two young men gravely shook hands on it. But they were reckoning without the impulses of men driven by shattered nerves and hatred—and the horrible hunger of the most amazing monster the world has ever known.

CHAPTER XVIII.

KING OF THE ISLAND.

ON the following morning, Mr. Barling, Julie and her mother were at breakfast under the canopy on the afterdeck when First Mate Bevan McTavish came aft to inform them that a native canoe was approaching from the island.

They could see it from where they sat. It contained but one man, who sat in the stern, vigorously wielding a crude paddle. They watched his progress with excitement.

"He must have put out from that point of land," McTavish said.

Mr. Barling studied the mysterious stranger through the mate's binoculars and exclaimed: "He's a white man!"

The canoe passed some distance astern of the Blue Goose.

"He's coming here!" Julie said excitedly.

The canoe stopped two hundred yards away. Its occupant removed binoculars from a case slung over his shoulder, placed them to his eyes and studied the Wanderer for some time. Then he returned the glasses to their case and resumed paddling.

When he was a hundred feet away, he shouted, "Wanderer ahoy! Can I come aboard and pay my respects?"

Mr. McTavish, at the head of the accommodation ladder, answered, "Who are you?"

The reply came clear and lusty: "I am Jason Rebb—the king of Little Nicobar!"

"Tell him, by all means, to come aboard," Mr. Barling said.

The king of Little Nicobar paddled alongside the accommodation ladder, made his canoe fast, and came springing up the steps. He was a soiled and sun-blackened specimen of forty-five, with a scraggly black beard, bold brown eyes and a wet red mouth. He wore a stained and battered old sun helmet shaped like a mushroom, so wide that it overlapped his narrow, square shoulders. His blue denim shirt and his white drill pants were in rags. He *wore* nothing on his feet. His shiny, new-looking binoculars case lent a striking note to that strange, Robinson Crusoe costume.

For a moment, as he came on deck, he stared at the breakfast table, with its snowy linen and sparkling silver. He was grinning. Certainly, there was nothing bashful or repressed about the king of Little Nicobar.

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Bold of eye, insolent of smile, he approached. Mr. Barling and Mrs. Farrington he dismissed with a glance. Grinning, he stared at Julie, fresh and cool and lovely in white deck pajamas. His eyes reminded her of bees, so busy they were prowling over her. He stared at her until she dropped her eyes with a feeling of shame.

"I just wanted to welcome you folks to my island," Mr. Rebb said. "I just wanted to tell you if there was anything I could do, don't hesitate to call on me. But from the looks of things, you don't stand in need of much." He let out a roar of laughter.

His accent was Australian. Julie had never seen a man with so much self-assurance. He stood with his naked brown feet planted fully two feet apart, and with his fists planted on his thick waist, staring at her and grinning.

MRS. FARRINGTON was eyeing him with apprehension. But Mr. Barling was apparently delighted with the informality of this dirty, insolent stranger. He said: "We heard something about a white chieftain here, didn't we, Julie?"

Julie nodded.

"The main reason I came out," said the king of Little Nicobar, "was, I thought you might be interested in seein' my tribe. They're puttin' on a show tonight—the big yearly orchid ceremony. They dance and they eat one o' the orchids. You seen 'em yet?" he asked eagerly.

"Not yet," Mr. Barling replied.

"Well, you've missed something, brother! They grow as big as a full grown man, and they smell like nothin' this side o' heaven. The ceremony goes on at ten o'clock tonight, and I'd like to have you come and see it. You'll never see anything like it as long as you live."

Mrs. Farrington shrank from the very glance of this strange, ragged creature, but Julie was fascinated and so was Mr. Barling.

They asked him questions. He answered willingly and with a complete absence of shyness and modesty.

Julie asked him how he had come to be king of Little Nicobar.

"Why," he said, "I used to be a magician. I had a variety act—what you call vaudeville in the States. I was goin' from Java to Malaya in a little hooker. A typhoon turned her inside out, and I got washed ashore here. I'd heard of Little Nicobar—and I was ready. I had some odds and ends in my pockets. When I got ashore and these black fellahs grabbed me, I kept yellin' 'Sambio! Sambio!' Then I gave 'em the treat of their lives. I took glass marbles out of their beards and coins out of their ears till they were rollin' on the beach in hysterics. It's a pipe when you know how."

He was still addressing himself to Julie, still prowling over her with those bee-like eyes.

"What does 'sambio' mean?" Julie asked.

"Peace! Peace! There was a native chieftain. I took beads out of his whiskers and a jackknife out of his hair—and he adopted me! He thought I was the greatest man that ever lived! And when he died, I became the king."

"When was this?" Mr. Barling politely inquired.

"I was shipwrecked here twelve years ago. The old man died two years later."

"Isn't it lonesome?" Mrs. Farrington timidly asked.

"Sometimes. But I like it."

"But—but aren't these people cannibals?"

Mr. Rebb threw back his head and laughed. He said, "Aw, that's old sailors' talk. There's no cannibalism in the South Seas any more. It's been stamped out."

Looking at him steadily, Julie said, "We've heard that these natives send shipwrecked men into the lagoon, to be eaten by that horrible thing."

"Before my time, maybe," said Mr. Rebb. "But not since. I've civilized them. Why! They're just like children!"

He was gazing at the bandage and splints about Mr. Barling's arm. And Mr. Rebb said: "Ho! You were in that fight last

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night! I heard you two miles away—hollering and shooting."

"Have you ever seen that thing?" Julie asked.

"No, thank you, ma'am. It's somethin' not to see. There's an old legend in my tribe that the man who looks on that thing walks in trouble the rest of his days. It's death and insanity and trouble—pukka trouble—to look on that thing. What happened?"

MR. BARLING told him dramatically of their adventure. And the king of Little Nicobar, with a sad head shake, commented: "You were lucky to come out alive."

He smoked several of Mr. Barling's dollar cigars.

And abruptly took his departure, after repeating his invitation.

"It's somethin' you'll never see the likes of as long as you live. No white man in the world but me has ever seen that orchid ceremony. You see that little point of land down there?"

Mr. Barling nodded.

"Meet me there at nine-thirty tonight. You ladies—" he bowed—"will be as safe as if you was at a lawn party in Devon. Have any of you been to Lake Howard, in the swamps of Puma?"

"No," Mr. Barling said.

"Well, they're somethin' like the natives there. You'll notice their strong Jewish cast. I tell you, folks, I honestly believe this is one o' the lost tribes o' Israel."

Julie said, "Gosh! That's interesting."

Even Mrs. Farrington was interested, although she detested men in dirty shirts.

And when the king of Little Nicobar had paddled away in his dugout canoe, she said, "Hector, you—you're not thinking seriously of going ashore tonight?"

"I'm tempted," Mr. Barling admitted.

"But he's such a ruffian!"

Julie left them arguing it, and went over to the Blue Goose. Larry and Oangi were at work dismantling the steel bayonets, which had so thoroughly proved their uselessness last night. Lucky Jones and Pete Cringle were busy in the stern with the deep-sea diving outfit.

SHE asked them what they were going to do with it, and Lucky said, "Just lookin' it over, baby."

"Where's Sam?"

"Still laid up with that bum back."

She went below and entered Sam's stateroom. He was lying in his bunk, his face wan with pain. But he grinned and said, "Slumming again, eh? I hear you had a visitor."

Julie told him about the amazing Mr. Rebb.

She had not said much when the red-headed man's eyes narrowed and his mouth hardened.

"I've met plenty of his kind," he said. "They'd steal the pennies off their dead grandmother's eyelids."

"I'd like to see that ceremony," Julie said wistfully.

"Don't be a little sap!"

She cried: "Who's being a little sap? It's a chance in a lifetime!"

"Guys like him eat little girls like you."

"I'm not afraid of him!"

"No? I'd rather have a date with a bubonic rat!"

For the first time in their friendship they were having harsh words.

Julie said angrily, "I'm sorry about your back. But I think it's given you a grouch. And I'll see that ceremony tonight!"

Their nerves were still finely drawn from last night's terrifying adventure. Julie left in a huff. When the tender had gone, Sam shouted for Larry. And when the mate came in, Sam said, "She's off her nut. It's that white chieftain. That slimy rat came out and asked them to go ashore tonight. You go over there and argue with Barling. Tell him I said it was too dangerous."

Shortly after Larry had gone, Lucky came below. He, too, had a grim, tense look. Larry had told him about Julie's threat to go ashore tonight.

"I'm gettin' fed up, Sam. Let's make a try for them pearls and get to hell out of here."

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Sam said, "Keep your shirt on, fellow. We've got an agreement with Bryce."

"To hell with him! Let him keep his five grand! Pete Cringle is game to make a try for them pearls now."

"How?"

"We're goin' ashore. We're gonna send him down off the beach in that suit."

Sam rose up on one elbow and grimaced with pain. "Nothing stirring. Send that kid down here."

Lucky yelled, "Pete!" and the boy came below, grinning.

"You listen to me, sap," Sammy said. "You're not going down in that suit."

"But it's safe, Mr. Shay."

"Safe! Good Lord! It was safe for Pegleg, and it was safe for Senga, too!"

"But that thing don't go near the beach in the daytime, Mr. Shay. We proved it."

"You saw what it did last night. You saw how fast it is. Stay away from that lagoon!"

"But I just tried the suit and the pump, Mr. Shay. They work fine. And that thing isn't strong enough to smash that suit. It's built for pressure. I been down fifty fathoms in that suit. You know how much pressure there is at fifty fathoms?"

Sammy, still on an elbow, stared at him and he stared at Lucifer Jones.

"What happened last night must have worked a lot of screws loose. You guys are all on edge. You're rarin' for action. Take it easy. Let's study this thing some more."

"If he don't go," Lucky said grimly, "I will."

Sammy tried to sit up, but his back was full of knives. He shouted for Bryce, and when the scientist came down told him to "talk this pair of saps out of pure suicide."

Lucky said, "This guy's got nothin' to say to me. Come on, kid."

SAM fell back with a groan and the three of them went out. He heard Bryce arguing with them, and he heard Lucky's snarling responses. He heard them loading the small boat, and he heard them start for the beach. He dragged himself up, almost fainting with pain, and looked out the porthole. Oangi was with them.

If it had not been for their blood-chilling adventure last night, he might not have been so concerned. It was hard to imagine that danger of any kind threatened on a day as beautiful as this. The cloudless sky was innocent, a lovely blue. The sea, gently undulating, was as bright, as blue as a Chantaboun sapphire, sparkling pleasantly under the hot sun. There was no breath of wind.

He saw the three men land on the beach, unload the diving suit and the pump, and carry it over the dune to the lagoon. With an agony of effort, he secured his binoculars and placed them to his eyes.

Pete Cringle was getting into the clumsy steel suit. Now Lucky was bolting down the face-plate. Oangi was working the pump.

Clumsily, the boy in the steel suit walked across the coral ledge beyond the stone cabin and entered the water, with Lucky standing at the edge, paying out hose and line, holding them up so that they would not drag on the knife-edged coral.

The steel suit flashed and glinted hotly in the sunlight. It was a fantastic sight—the shining steel suit, like the armor of a knight, against the white of the beach and the sapphire blue of the water.

He was going down now. Gripping the porthole, with the sweat of pain streaming down his face, Sammy watched. His eyes darted along the wall of jungle. He didn't trust Jason Rebb and his savages. But he trusted the lagoon less.

The steel suit went slowly into the blue water. Pete Cringle was apparently proceeding with caution. He was facing the lagoon as he went into the water, taking slow steps. Now he was waist deep. He went on. Lucky, at the water's edge, paid out the rope and hose slowly, merely keeping the slack out of them.

Now the water was lapping about the face-plate. The great, grotesque helmet went under. Bubbles came surging up.

Watching the lagoon, Sam let out his breath. Oangi was methodically working

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the pump. Lucky was holding the hose in one hand, the rope in the other. The diver was going down.

Sam's heart was thumping. Unknown to himself, he was growling curses. Nothing was happening. Nothing was going to happen, but he wished that kid would hurry.

And suddenly he saw the ripple on the calm face of the lagoon. It was moving swiftly from the center toward the shore, toward the stone cabin. An icy pain gripped Sam's heart. He shouted at the top of his lungs: "Get him out! Get him out!"

Bryce Robbins, on the deck above, took up the shout. His voice was a thin scream: "Get him out!"

The ripple was not a tiderip. It was rounder, smoother, and it hadn't a broken side, as tiderips always do.

There was sudden activity on the beach. Lucky was hauling in on the line. He was being dragged in to the edge. He ran across the beach to a coconut palm and took a turn with the line about it. The line tightened. The fronds began to shiver as if a ghostly wind were stirring them. Then the tree bent. Suddenly the line snapped. It slid like a snake into the water. The hose followed it, dragging the pump along. Hose, rope and pump vanished into the lagoon.

Above the frantic hammering of his heart, Sammy heard Lucky's and Oangi's yells. Then he saw a gray glimmer, like a wave of slime, on the beach. Sun glistened on shooting tentacles.

Lucky and Oangi ran back from the beach. With a sick groan, Sammy relinquished the rim of the porthole, dropped his binoculars, and fell back upon his bunk.

CHAPTER XIX.

DEVIL DANCE.

BRYCE came clattering down the stairs. He burst, white-faced and grimacing, into the room. He panted: "It got Pete! It went after Lucky and Oangi! Oh, those damn fools! Those idiots!"

Sam said weakly, "Yeah. Look out and see if they're getting away."

Bryce looked out the porthole. "They're just coming over the dune, running like mad."

"Is that thing after them?"

"No. They're getting into the boat . . . they're shoving out."

Sam groaned, "Oh, that poor damned kid. That poor little sap!"

He could hear the oars splashing. Bryce said: "Lucky's at the oars, rowing like a madman."

The small boat came alongside. Lucky's panting and cursing could be clearly heard. Then his unsteady feet were on the stairs. He came down, white-faced, with horrified eyes, and snatched up the bottle of trade gin on the table beside the bunk. He drank a half pint of it and, panting, faced Sammy.

"It—it got him, Sam!"

"Yeah, I was watching."

"It—it crushed that suit like it was made of wet paper! You—you could see the blood squirtin' out. It squashed that suit flat and it just tore it to pieces! Oh, that poor kid! Then it come up on the beach after us. You never saw anything happen so fast. There was a hundred of them tentacles in the air at once! It almost got Oangi."

"It's a damned shame," Bryce said wrathfully, "it didn't get you, you fool, you damned utter senseless idiot!"

Lucky swayed a little, with fists gripped at his sides. His lower lip jutted, his black brows came down and in and met.

"Yeah," he said. "It don't cost a dime to say that!" He started toward Bryce and Sam barked: "Steady as you go, you ape! You've done enough for one afternoon!"

Lucky turned, like a man in a drunken daze. His eyes were worse than mad. They were stark and horrible and empty.

He suddenly shouted, "I'm gonna kill that thing! I'm gonna take this ship to Singapore and load it to the rail with powder, and I'm gonna blast that son-of-a—"

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"Steady!" Sammy stopped him. "We aren't going to kill it. We aren't going to drop our plan for any crazy man. Get in there and take a cold shower. Then get yourself drunk and stop raving."

Lucky lurched out of the room with the bottle in his hand. He ignored only one of Sammy's suggestions: he didn't take a shower.

Larry returned from the Wanderer, wanting to know what had happened at the island.

Sammy said, "Pete went down in that suit to try for the pearls in the cave—and it got him."

"Oh, God. That poor kid."

Sammy repeated portions of Lucky's description of the gruesome and hideous end of "the best deep-sea diver on the Indian Ocean."

And Larry said, "Hell, Sam. You can't blame Lucky. After what happened last night, it's a wonder we all aren't crazy. Over there, everybody on board is on the verge of cracking. It's fierce. The crew is ready to mutiny. That woman is having hysterics. And Julie and Barling insist they're going ashore tonight."

Drearily, Sam said, "Oh, nuts."

"I've been talking to them ever since I went over. There's something gotten into them. That Barling is a little screwy, anyway. But I didn't think Julie'd go haywire on us."

"All women," Sam said, "are screwy. Show them some excitement and they go nuts. Well, what are you going to do about it?"

BRYCE came in. He had overheard enough of the conversation to grasp its essentials.

Sam said, "You'd better both go over there and try to talk sense into them. Tell 'em I said it's risky. Tell 'em these white chieftains are rats—always rats. This Rebb is poison."

Lucky came in, staggering, with the look of a man awash. He said heavily, "You guys can listen to me now. I'm fed up. Do you get it? I'm fed up. I'm through. I've seen three good men killed by that thing. It's got a jinx on us."

Bryce said coldly: "What happened to Pete Cringle was needless. It was murder. It was—"

"Stow it!" Sam barked. "We're all in this. We're all to blame. We could have stopped Pegleg from going ashore. It was my fault for losing Senga. We were too damned reckless. From now on, we use our heads."

"We're through!" Lucky snarled. "We're pullin' out!"

"No," Bryce snapped.

"By God, I'll take you to pieces the way that thing took Pete—"

"Pipe down!" Sammy shouted.

Lucky glared blearily at him. "Who's runnin' this show?"

Bryce said icily, "We have an agreement!"

"To hell with the agreement! You agreed in the Mudhole for Sam and me and Larry to have the say. We're sayin' it now. We're through!"

"You're out-voted," Sam quietly answered. "Now, clear out and finish getting yourself plastered. And if you sober up inside of two days, I'll put it into you with a force pump."

Growling, Lucky staggered out. And Sam said, "Bryce, will you go back to the yacht with Larry and argue with Barling?"

"No," the scientist snapped. "They ought to know now how safe this place is. Tell them about Pete, Larry. Let them use their judgment."

Larry went to his room. He shaved, bathed, got into clean whites and returned to the Wanderer. When darkness fell and he had not come back to the schooner, Sammy supposed he was staying over there for dinner. And he presumed that Larry had talked them out of going ashore.

But at a little after nine-thirty he heard the soft exhaust of the tender. And when the soft purring receded until it was finally lost in the far rumble of the barrier reef, he called Bryce below. The scientist said, "They went ashore at the mangrove point."

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And Sam growled, "I have a feeling we'll all be dead before this is through."

MR. BARLING, Julie and Larry McGurk had gone ashore. There was no moon, but the stars were so bright that a man's face could be distinguished six or eight feet distant.

Julie wore a sailor's suit and a Sam Browne belt with an automatic pistol in the holster. Mr. Barling carried an automatic rifle, and Larry had a revolver in his hip pocket.

It was Julie who had insisted on going. All day she had been in a reckless mood. She couldn't sit still for five minutes. She could hardly eat. And when Larry told her of Pete Cringle's fate she had not been subdued. She had burst into tears, and when this fit of hysterical sobbing had gone its way, she was more restless than ever. She must, she declared, have action.

A half-dozen times Larry had argued Mr. Barling around to the point where he would have called off tonight's trip ashore, if Julie had only backed down. But Julie would not back down. She wanted action.

When the keel of the tender scraped the sand, Jason Rebb, more mysterious and certainly more sinister by starlight than by sunlight, stepped out onto a patch of sand between the black mangroves.

He greeted them heartily. He said he had been looking forward all day to their visit, but he addressed himself exclusively to Julie. Then he saw that she was armed.

"My dear young lady," Mr. Rebb said, in the accents of alarm, "you don't want to be hurt, do you? And the same goes for you gents, too. My people are just like children, but they know what firearms mean. Firearms mean trouble. I've told them you're coming in a friendly spirit, but if you have firearms, they'll think I lied to them. They'll think you mean to kill them."

Peering into the black wall of jungle, Julie said huskily, "Where are they?"

The king of Little Nicobar chuckled. "Oh, they're scared. Some of 'em ain't more than twenty feet away, peekin' at you. But most of them are down at the old crater. The ceremony is on. Now, folks, if you'll just leave your guns in the boat and follow me—"

"But why," Mr. Barling plaintively interrupted, "are you carrying that cutlass?"

"I'll show you. It's part of the orchid ceremony."

Larry was averse to leaving their guns behind, but Julie, once again, overrode him. They left their weapons in the tender and followed Mr. Rebb along a jungle trail toward a blood-red glow in the night.

Perhaps an eighth of a mile from the beach they passed the village, now dark. There were thatched huts on bamboo poles, after the Malay fashion, and there was one huge structure of riata, interlaced palm fronds and palm boles. It measured perhaps one hundred feet across the front, and must have been two hundred feet long, by thirty in height, with an arched roof and a floor made of logs from the goru palm.

This, Mr. Rebb explained, was the *dobu*, or communal house, where everyone except the sick lived. It was partitioned into stalls or small rooms.

The embers of cook fires smoldered in front of the *dobu*. They passed this and re-entered the jungle. Sharp yells accompanied by a barbaric thumping made it difficult to talk. The glare became brighter until they could see the fire through thinning trees.

The king of Little Nicobar shouted to his guests, "You better start yellin' *sambio* now! Yell it good and loud and keep on yellin' it."

So Julie, Mr. Barling and Larry started yelling, "*Sambio! Sambio!*" The yelling and the rhythm ahead of them did not diminish, but yells of "*Sambio! Sambio!*" were flung back at them.

MR. REBB and his guests entered the clearing. In the center of a wide, shallow depression which strangely reminded Julie of the craters of the moon, was a fire of blazing faggots. On the far side, half-naked men were beating on

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gourds and empty kerosene tins, setting up a barbaric clamor. Black men and women were dancing about the fire, hopping first on one foot, then on the other, and chanting as they hopped.

A small roar greeted Mr. Rebb and his guests. He shouted to Julie, "They're all ready now. They're all set, my dear. You better stop right here. Don't move. If anybody comes close, just yell *sambio*."

Julie was shivering. She felt a little faint. She was more than a little scared. It was her first glimpse of any kind of barbaric ritual. The sharp sounds, the thud of men's feet as they hopped, pounded at her nerves and set them jangling.

Mr. Rebb left her side and walked part of the way around the enclosure to a great black tree from which hung a white and softly gleaming object as large as a man. It might have been, in fact, a man hanging.

It was Julie's first glimpse of the fabulous and monstrous blue orchids of Little Nicobar. She had grown so accustomed to the sickening sweetness of them that she had not particularly observed it tonight until now. And now she realized that the perfume was overpoweringly strong, a scent so powerful that she wanted to fight it off.

Mr. Rebb was climbing upon a structure of some sort beside the gleaming white mass. He began chopping at the top of it with his cutlass. The natives stopped dancing and gathered around him until Mr. Rebb was lost from view.

The great orchid suddenly dropped. There was a milling in the crowd. Six men were carrying the orchid toward Julie, Larry and Mr. Barling.

When they were twenty-five feet away, they dropped it. The savage rhythm started again, and the black men and women again began to dance.

Staring at the monstrous orchid, Julie shuddered. In the wavering firelight, it reminded her of the torso of a woman. It was much longer, but it had that shape. Its pale-blue flesh gleamed pinkly-white in the firelight.

A woman leaped at the great orchid, threw herself across it, and, with her teeth, tore out great shreds of the sweetly reeking flesh. She tore out handfuls and leaped up, hopping back, in rhythm to the gourds and the kerosene tins. She held her long skinny black arms over her head and squeezed the handfuls of fragrant flesh-like stuff until juice ran down her arms and spattered into her upturned face.

A black man had hurled himself down on the orchid. He, too, bit into the flesh of it, and tore out handfuls of the fibrous pale-blue stuff and leaped up, with hands held stiffly overhead.

Julie grasped Larry's elbow to steady herself. She felt sick. It was hideous. It was obscene.

The natives were yelling more loudly now, and dancing with greater abandon, working themselves to a higher and higher emotional pitch. The din was deafening.

JASON REBB rejoined them. He threw down his cutlass. He grinned and clapped his hands with the beat of the gourds and tins. The firelight in his eyes made them resemble glowing coals. And the fireplay on his impudent profile gave it a saturnine look.

To Julie, he was suddenly an ogre—a human turned monster, offensive, loathsome.

She tried, through her fright, to be polite. She shouted at him, "We must go! We've seen enough! It's been wonderful!"

He caught one of her hands and squeezed and held it. He stared at her face, baring his teeth, and playfully shook his head, not releasing her hand. "You can't go tonight!"

Larry seized his shoulder and spun him roughly about. "Why can't she go tonight?"

The king of Little Nicobar lost his grin. His fiery eyes seemed to glitter. He shook Larry's hand away and snarled, "She is their guest of honor. They would be offended if she left now."

Larry gave him another push and shouted: "Let go her hand! We're going!"

"You're going to hell!" shouted Mr.

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Rebb. "But she's staying here! She's staying with me! From now on! Get it?" And to Julie, with that satanic grin, "We need a queen. I need a queen."

But he had released Julie's hand. She cried: "Larry! Hector! What are we going to do?"

Mr. Barling was too shocked, too horrified, to answer. Mr. Rebb made another lunge at Julie. Larry met him with a shoulder and butted him back. All day he had anticipated something of this sort, and yet he had made no plans for meeting it. What could three unarmed people do in the midst of savages famed for their cruelty, ruled by a white rascal?

Some of the black men, perhaps a dozen, had stopped jumping about the fire and were now gathering in a semi-circle between Jason Rebb and the dancing fire, as if they were acting on a signal from him. Many of them carried spears — black-handled weapons with points elaborately and cruelly barked with native thorns and the spines of fish. They would rend and rip and tear flesh in a hideous manner.

The king of Little Nicobar yelled, "Try it! Try and get away!"

Julie had gone behind Larry. She was standing as close to him as she could, clasping him about the chest. He could feel the tremors running through her, he could hear the chattering of her teeth.

Behind her, Mr. Barling panted: "Do something, McGurk! For God's sake get us out of this!"

Jason Rebb heard part of it. "Yah!" he jeered. "Do something, McGurk! One move—and you get a spear in your belly! Go on, McGurk! Do something!"

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

A Man For Sale

ON Monday, November 14, 1842, the only slave sale in Chicago history occurred. It involved Edwin Heathcock, colored, who had enraged his employer, a farmer living on the north branch of the Chicago River. In retaliation for certain offensive remarks, the farmer had Heathcock committed to jail on the grounds of being in Illinois without free papers.

Lowe, then sheriff, advertised during six weeks in the Chicago *Democrat:* A man for sale. On the Saturday night preceding November 14, Eastman, an abolitionist, and Calvin De Wolf, then a young lawyer, printed a number of handbills headed: "A Man For Sale."

Monday morning a crowd gathered that blocked the corner of La Salle and Randolph Streets, and up to the log jail. Lowe brought the man out and addressed the crowd:

"Here is an able bodied man; I am required to sell him for a term of service, for the best price I can get for him to pay jail fees. How much am I offered?"

The people looked on, glum and scowling, in expressive silence. Finally the threat of putting the man back in the miserable jail brought an offer.

"I bid twenty-five cents." This was the voice of Mahlon D. Ogden. Appeals were made for an increase of the bid. Then the man was struck off to Ogden. He handed the sheriff a silver quarter in the presence of the crowd, who gave a liberal cheer. He then called the man to him and said:

"Edwin, I have bought you; I have given a quarter for you; you are my man—my slave! Now, go where you please."

—*John E. Reilly.*

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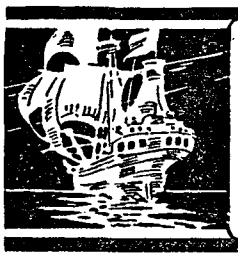

Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint

HE gets his dime's worth:

Akron, Ohio.

The outstanding story in ARGOSY for the year 1934, in my opinion, was "East River." Reasons:

1. Instructive.
2. Lots of action.
3. Humor.
4. Different.

I am in my eighth year of ARGOSY reading, and I haven't a kick to make. *I get my dime's worth.*

CARL F. FOSTER.

ONCE a reader, always a reader:

Worcester, Mass.

I have been a constant reader of ARGOSY for the past ten years, having missed very few issues during this period. But for some reason I have never written either to praise the different authors or to criticize stories that I did not particularly care for. Everyone prefers some particular type of story, and surely there is variety enough in ARGOSY to please all.

For several years I was engaged in visiting the sick and shut-in brothers of a fraternal order. During this time I found that good fiction was very much appreciated. I have given away many ARGOSYS, and without a doubt have made a few steady readers—once a reader, always a reader.

It should prove not only interesting, but of some assistance to the editor to find the reasons why certain ARGOSY stories were outstanding, in the opinion of the readers. The "Fatal Alarm," by Karl Detzer, will probably be mentioned by many, and is my selection as the outstanding story of 1934, for the following reasons: 1. Fire has a peculiar fascination for almost everyone, fear being the underlying cause, perhaps. 2. The scientific methods now used to fight all types of blazes by the men who continually risk their lives in so doing are of tremendous interest. 3. The daily lives, the experiences, the duties, pleasant and otherwise, of firemen are most interesting to those whose occupations are less hazardous. 4. The story in question might well have been called "The Great American Adventure." It depicted a cross section of life that could be found only in an American city, for nowhere else could crooked politicians and grafters exert such an influence against honest, conscientious officials. 5. The unscrupulous methods of these political ward bosses and gangsters were graphically exposed by author Detzer. 6. The hero was a credit to American youth; he was honest, had good principles, was ambitious and had a grim determination to win by playing square. 7. This story could not help but exert a good influence on those young men who were so fortunate as to have read it.

Here's hoping for a new Detzer serial soon. I would also like one of those long stories by Ared White, whose secret service adventures are very fine.

WHAT is *your* idea of the best story (of any length, from short story to serial) published in ARGOSY during the year 1934? For the twelve post cards or letters from readers which, in the opinion of the editors, give the best reasons why this or that story stood out above all others, the magazine will reward the letter-writers with twelve full, yearly subscriptions. We don't want mere praise; we are interested in finding out exactly what stories you most liked, so that in future we may give you more fiction of the same kind.

It isn't necessary for you to have read every story in every one of the fifty-two issues published during 1934. If there was some story which struck your fancy enough so that it stands out in your memory above all others, even though you read but five or ten out of the whole fifty-two copies of the magazine, write us and tell us why you liked that story. You will have just as good a chance to win one of those twelve subscriptions as someone who read all the issues from cover to cover. But we must know *why* you liked the story.

Letters selected by the editors will be published from week to week, *but not all letters published will receive subscriptions.*

Make your letter as long or as brief as you want to, and still give all your reasons. Then address it to the EDITOR, The ARGOSY, 280 Broadway, New York City, so that it will reach us not later than March 9th, 1935.

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Best wishes for the continued success of ARGOSY during the year 1935.

CHARLES W. NELSON.

ARGOSY readers will remember 1934:

Fairhaven, Mass.

There are times when everyone wants to be a vagabond and wander down the road to adventure; to see strange people, strange lands, the mountains and the sea. The bonds of convention, however, are many and strong, and few ever break them and go. And how we envy those who are able to relinquish all to adventure along strange paths! The booming of temple gongs over the rice fields has sounded in their ears; they have tasted strange foods, cooked on charcoal fires in the twilight quiet of midocean isles; they know the mountain wind, keen with the smell of snow, the mystery of roads along great rivers, and the broad path of ships on lonely seas. Whatever was to be seen, they went to see; they merely did what so many of us have wanted to do.

For those of us who are unable to toss aside the shackles of convention, there are other ways in which we may satisfy the wanderlust and still remain within conventional bonds. We, at least, can be imaginary, if not actual, vagabonds. And I, for one, know of no better way to achieve this end than through the medium of the most popular all-fiction magazine, ARGOSY. With ARGOSY's masters of high adventure to guide us, we, too, can weigh anchor! We can drink deep of the fresh, tangy air of the sea. We listen to the song of the capstan, the pipe of the boatswain's whistle, the "heave-ho" of sunbrowned seamen, and the roar of great sails as they belly out with the wind. And then—

Set sail over the azure blue ocean, out—out past the ground-swell. The magic spell of the sea creeps over us; we sense its mystery, its majesty, its power, its brooding loneliness and glory. To the Congo, the Malay Archipelago, China, India, the Red Sea, the romantic shores of the Mediterranean.

ARGOSY readers will long remember 1934 as a year in which they experienced, imaginatively, undreamt-of adventures. Personally, I cannot help recalling what I consider the best serial ever published in ARGOSY since the time when I read my first copy. I refer to that tale of tales, "The Barbarian," by F. V. W. Mason. A vivid portrayal of life's drama during an adventurous time and in an ancient civilization. Its historical setting captured the imagination in such a way that the reader almost imagined himself to be transplanted back into those remote days when Rome and Carthage ruled the world.

It is such stories as "The Barbarian" that win for ARGOSY the reader's continued loyalty.

(MISS) BEATRICE MILLER.

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W. C. TUTTLE

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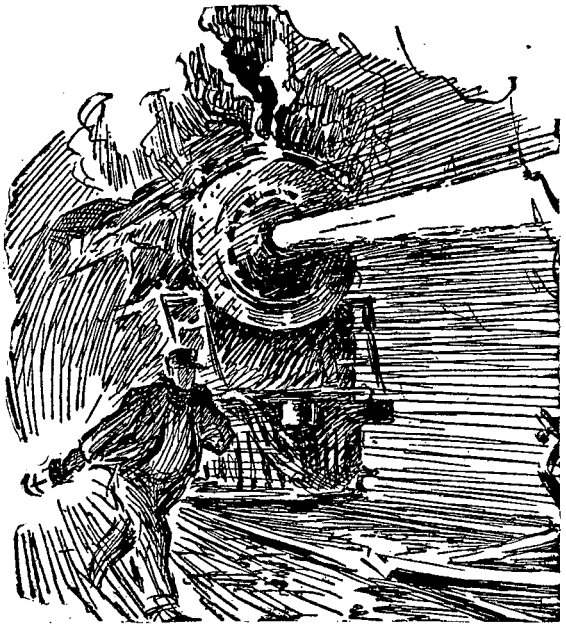

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The less he spoke, the more he heard;
Just take a tip from this wise old bird:

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